

# THE NUN.

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By DIDEROT.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

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VOLUME II.

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## THE NUN.

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THE Archdeacon and his two young ecclesiastics, the lady of the President D\*\*\*, and M. Manouri, were assembled in the Superior's apartment, when they were informed of my departure. On the road the nun acquainted me with every thing relative to the house; and, by way of chorus to every expression which was uttered in its praise, the box girl added, It is the downright truth. . . . She congratulated herself that the choice of coming for me had fallen upon her, and at the same time made a tender of her friend-

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ship.

ship. In consequence of this, she entrusted me with some secrets, and gave me some advice with regard to the conduct I ought to follow. Her advice was probably very proper for her situation, but it was not applicable to mine.— I don't know whether you have ever seen the convent of Arpajon. It is a large square building, one of the sides of which overlooks the highway, the other the fields and gardens. At each of the front windows, there were one, two, or three nuns; and from this circumstance, I derived more knowledge of the order, that prevailed in the house, than from all the nun and her companion had said. It seemed that they knew the carriage in which we were, for in a twinkling all the veils disappeared, and I arrived at the gate of my new prison. The Superior came to meet me with open arms, embraced me,

me, took my hand and led me into the hall which belonged to the community, where a few nuns had assembled before I entered, and to which others immediately flocked.

The name of this Superior was Madam \*\*\*. I cannot resist the impulse I feel to give you a description of her before proceeding farther. She is a little woman, very plump, yet nimble and active in her motions. Her head never stands still upon her shoulders a single moment. There is always something out of order in her dress. Her figure is neither good nor bad: her eyes, one of which, the right, is higher and larger than the other, are full of fire, mixed with something of wildness. When she walks, she tosses her arms backwards and forwards. When she is going to speak, she opens her mouth before she has arranged her ideas, and

therefore stutters a little. When she sits, she shifts about in her chair as if she something felt uneasy. She is totally careless of decorum. She takes her handkerchief from her neck to rub her skin ; she crosses her legs, asks you a question, and while you answer, pays no attention to what you say. She speaks to you, and then bewilders herself ; stops short, and forgets where she was ; loses her temper, and calls you ass, brute, idiot, if you cannot lead her back to the subject. Sometimes she is so familiar as to say *thee* and *thou* ; sometimes haughty and imperious, even to disdain. Her moments of dignity are short. She is alternately tender and severe. The discomposure of her figure marks all the disorder of her mind, and the inequality of her character. From this cause order and confusion alternately succeeded each other in the house,

house. Some days all distinction and order were confounded; boarders and novices, novices and nuns, were mingled together; they ran from chamber to chamber, or took tea, coffee, chocolate, liqueurs, with each other; or service was hurried over with incredible celerity. In the midst of this tumult the countenance of the Superior suddenly changes; the bell rings; the nuns retire and shut themselves in their apartments; the most profound silence succeeds to noise, shouting and tumult; and you would imagine that, all at once, Death had visited every creature in the house. If a nun at such a time is guilty of the slightest omission, the Superior summons her to her cell, treats her with rigour, commands her to undress, and give herself twenty stripes with the scourge. The nun obeys, undresses herself, takes the scourge, and macerates herself.

But no sooner has she bestowed a few stripes, than the Superior, having resumed her sympathetic disposition, snatches the instrument of penance, bursts into tears, laments her misfortune in being obliged to punish, kisses her forehead, her eyes, her mouth, her shoulders, loads her with caresses and with praises : How soft and white is her skin ! how plump she is ! what a lovely bosom ! what beautiful ringlets ! . . . Sister Saint Augustine, how foolish you are to be ashamed ! let go that neckerchief, I am a woman, and your Superior ; O ! what a lovely bosom ! how firm ! and could I endure to see it torn by the lash ? No, No, that shall not be.—She then kisses her, raises her up, dresses her with her own hands, says to her the kindest things, dispenses with her attendance upon exercises, and sends her back to her cell. It is extremely



remely unpleasant to be placed with women of this character. We cannot tell either what will please or displease them, what we ought to do, and what we ought to avoid. Nothing is conducted after a regular system. We are either supplied with profusion, or starved to death. The economy of the house is thrown into confusion; remonstrances either give offence or are neglected. We are either too near or too far removed from Superiors of this description. Neither true distance nor proper measure are observed. We pass from disgrace to favour, and from favour to disgrace, without knowing why. If you please, I will give you a general example of her administration. Twice in the year she used to run from cell to cell, and throw out at the window all the bottles of liqueur that were to be found; and four days after, she herself would

send presents of them to most of the nuns. Such was the woman to whom I had taken the solemn vow of obedience; for our vows accompany us from one house to another.

I entered the hall along with her; she led me, at the same time embracing me round the waist. A collation of fruits, biscuits and confectionary, was presented. The grave Archdeacon began my panegyric, which she interrupted by, They were wrong, they were wrong; I know it. . . . The grave Archdeacon attempted to go on, and she again interrupted him by, How could they possibly think of parting with her? She is sweetness and modesty itself; I am told she possesses the finest talents. . . . The grave Archdeacon attempted to resume his last words, but the Superior again interrupted him, by whispering in my ear, I am perfectly  
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in love with you, and when these pedants are gone, I will call our sisters, and you will sing us a little air, won't you?—I was seized with a violent inclination to laugh. The grave M. Hebert was a little disconcerted; his two young companions smiled at his embarrassment and mine. M. Hebert, however, resuming his usual character and manners, roughly ordered the Superior to sit down and be silent. She sat down, but she was ill at ease; she moved about on her chair, yawned, scratched her head, adjusted her dress where it was not deranged, while the Archdeacon very methodically harangued upon the house I had quitted, the ill treatment I had experienced, upon the house I had entered, and the obligations I owed to the persons who had befriended me. At this place, I looked at M. Manouri, and he turned his eyes to the ground. The conversation then became more general; the painful silence

lence imposed upon the Superior ceased, I went up to M. Manouri, and thanked him for the services he had done me. I trembled and stuttered, and knew not how to promise to testify my gratitude. My confusion, my embarrassment, my emotion (for I was really affected); mingled tears and joy; my whole conduct spoke to him more forcibly than words could have expressed. His answer was no better arranged than my address, for his confusion was not less than mine. I don't know exactly what he said, but I understood him to mean, that he would be more than sufficiently rewarded if he had contributed to soften the rigour of my fortune; that he would recollect what he had done with greater pleasure than I could feel; that he was extremely sorry that his business, which confined him to the Courts of Paris, would not allow him frequently to visit the Convent of Arpajon; but he hoped

for the permission of the Archdeacon, and of the Superior, to enquire after my health and my situation. The Archdeacon did not hear, but the Superior answered, As much as you please, Sir ; she shall be at liberty to do whatever she pleases ; we shall endeavour to repair here the sufferings which were elsewhere inflicted upon her.... And then she added to me in a whisper, So, you then suffered a great deal, my child ! But how could these creatures at Longchamp have the heart to use you ill ? I was formerly acquainted with your Superior ; we were boarders together at Port-Royal ; she was no better than her neighbours. We shall have an opportunity to see each other, and you will inform me of the whole circumstance.... Saying this, she took one of my hands, which she tapped gently with hers. The young ecclesiastics likewise paid  
me

me their compliments. It grew late, and M. Manouri took leave of us. The Archdeacon and his companions went to the house of M\*\*\*, Lord of Arpajon, to which they had been invited, and I remained alone with the Superior ; but we were not long left to ourselves. All the nuns, all the novices, all the boarders, flocked, indiscriminately, and in an instant I found myself surrounded by at least a hundred persons. I knew not which to listen to, and which to answer. Among them were figures of every description, and the remarks they made were of every sort. I could perceive, however, that they were not dissatisfied either with my answers or my person.

After this troublesome conference had lasted some time, and the first ardour of curiosity was satisfied, the crowd decreased, the Superior dismissed the rest, and



and she went in person to instal me in my cell. She performed the honours of it in her own way. She pointed out the oratory, and said to me, Here my little friend will say her prayers ; I will direct a cushion to be laid upon the step, that her little knees may not be hurt. There is no holy water in the bason ! that Sister Dorothy always forgets something ! Try that arm chair, and see how it fits you. . . . Saying this, she seated me, turned back my head, and kissed my forehead. She then went to the window, to see that the sashes played easily ; to the bed next, and drew and undrew the curtains, to see that they shut properly. She examined the blankets, they were good ; she took the bolster, and stroking it up, said, Dear little head will lie very well there. These sheets are not fine, but they are such as are allowed to the members of the community.

community. The mattrass is good. . . . Having done this, she came up, embraced, and took leave of me. During this scene, I said to myself, O the foolish creature ! and thought I might expect to spend both good and bad days.

I put all my things in order in my cell ; I was present at evening service, at supper, and at the recreation which followed. Some of the nuns accosted me, I was shunned by others. The former were anxious to secure my protection with the Superior, the latter were alarmed at the predilection she had already discovered in my favour. These first moments passed in mutual compliments, in questions relative to the house I had quitted, in attempts to sound my character, my inclinations, my understanding, my taste. They employ every artifice to discover your temper and character. It is a train of little ambuscades,



ambuscades, into which they endeavour to draw you, and from which they form the most accurate conclusions. For instance, a word of scandal is introduced, and then they watch your looks with the strictest eye. They begin a story, and they try whether you leave it with indifference, or express a wish to hear the remainder. If you make a common remark, it is extolled as very fine, though they know that is nothing extraordinary. They praise or blame you, with a view to discover your disposition. They endeavour to unveil your most secret thoughts. They ask you questions concerning your reading. They offer you books, both sacred and profane. The choice you make is remarked. They tempt you to commit some slight violation of the rules. They throw out to you oblique insinuations against the Superior. Every thing is  
catched

caught at and repeated. They quit you, and again join your company. They sound your sentiments upon manners, piety, the world, religion, the monastic life, upon every thing. From these reiterated experiments, an epithet, descriptive of your character, is derived, and annexed to your name. Thus I was called Sister Saint Susan *the reserved*.

The evening of my arrival I received a visit from the Superior, who came to undress me. She took off my veil and my neckerchief, put on my night-cap, and entirely undressed me herself. She uttered innumerable compliments, and bestowed upon me a thousand caresses, which a little embarrassed me, I know not wherefore, for neither she nor I meant any thing ; even now that I reflect upon it, what meaning could we possibly have ? I spoke of the subject to my director, who treated this familiarity

liarity which appeared to me, and still appears, innocent, in a very serious light, and gravely prohibited me from submitting to it any more. She kissed my neck, my shoulders, my arms, praised my shape and my size, and then put me into bed. She lifted up the bed clothes on both sides, kissed my eyes, then drew the curtains and went away. I forgot to mention that, supposing I was fatigued, she gave me permission to lie in bed as long as I pleased.

I availed myself of this permission, and this I believe is the only good night's repose I ever enjoyed in the cloister, and would have been so almost had I never left it. Next morning at nine o'clock, I heard a gentle knock at my door ; I was still in bed ; I answered, and the person entered. It was a nun, who told me, with no small

share of ill humour, that it was late, and the mother Superior wanted me. I rose, dressed myself in haste, and went down. Good morning, my child, said she; have you slept well? Here is some coffee, which has been kept for you an hour, I believe you will find it good; make haste and take it, then we shall have some conversation. . . . Saying this, she laid a cloth upon the table, and spread another upon my knee, poured out the coffee, and put in the sugar. The rest of the nuns were employed in the same manner, in each others apartments. While I was at breakfast she talked to me of my companions, painted them to me according to her feelings of aversion or favour, made me a thousand protestations of friendship, asked me innumerable questions concerning the house I had quitted, my parents, the grievances I had

I had

I had suffered, praised or blamed, as her fancy directed, and never heard any of my answers to an end. I never contradicted her. She was pleased with my understanding, my judgement, and my discretion. Meanwhile, in came one nun, then another, then a third, a fourth, and a fifth. They talked of the Superior's birds, she of the Sisters tricks, the others of all the little absurdities of those who were absent. They began to be very merry. There was a spinet in one corner of the cell. From mere absence of mind, I touched it with one of my fingers; for being but newly come to the house, and unacquainted with those they made the subject of their mirth, the conversation afforded me little amusement; and though I had been more conversant in the circumstances, I should not have been better entertained. It requires a great deal of

wit to jest successfully ; and besides, who is there exempted from one foible or other which is liable to ridicule ? While they laughed, I struck a few notes ; by degrees I attracted their attention. The Superior came up to me, and giving me a gentle tap on the shoulder, Come, Saint Susan, said she, amuse us with your skill ; play first, and then sing. I did as she desired me. I performed a few pieces that I knew without book, flourished some others irregularly, and then sung a few verses of Mondonville's psalms. Very fine indeed, said the Superior ; but we have devotional pieces in the church, as much as we please ; we are alone, these are my friends, and they will also be yours ; sing us something more sprightly. Some of the nuns observed : But perhaps these form all her stock ; she is fatigued with her journey ; we must spare

spare



spare her ; this is quite enough for once.—No, no, 'said the Superior, she accompanies delightfully, she has the finest voice in the world (and really I have a very good one, with more correctness, sweetness and flexibility indeed, than force and pitch) ; I will not let her off till she gives us something else.—I was a little offended at the remarks of the nuns, and answered the Superior, that my singing no longer amused the sisters.—But it still amuses me.—I suspected the sincerity of this answer. I sung, however, a very delicate canzonette, and they all clapped, applauded, embraced, caressed me, and entreated a second. All this was little hollow grimace, dictated by the answer of the Superior. There was scarcely one of them but would have deprived me of my voice, and broken my fingers, had it been in her power. Those who perhaps had never

heard music in their lives, thought proper to express themselves of my singing in terms equally ridiculous and disgusting, which by no means were well received by the Superior. Peace, said she to them, she sings and plays like an angel, and I wish her to come here every day ; I myself *formerly understood the harpsichord a little*, and I wish her assistance in recovering what I have now forgotten. Ah ! Madam, said I, when we have once understood any thing, it is never entirely forgotten. . . . With all my heart then, give me your place. . . . After a few flourishes, she played some things, foolish, wild and incoherent, as her own ideas ; but through all the defects of her execution, I saw she had a touch infinitely superior to mine. I told her so, for I am fond of bestowing praise, and I rarely miss the opportunity of doing it when consistent with truth,

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truth ; it is attended with so agreeable a sensation ! The nuns disappeared one after the other, and I remained alone with the Superior to converse of music. She was seated, I was standing ; she took my hands, and squeezing them, said to me, But besides that she plays finely, she has the prettiest fingers in the world ; look here, Sister Theresa. . . Sister Theresa dropped her eyes to the ground, blushed and stuttered : yet whether I had pretty fingers or not, whether the Superior was right, or wrong in the observation, how could this Sister be affected by it ? The Superior took me round the waist, and she discovered that I had a very excellent shape ; she drew me towards her, and seated me on her knees. She turned my head, and bade me look at her. She praised my eyes, my mouth, my cheeks, my complexion.

I made no answer ; my eyes were fixed upon the ground, and I passively suffered all her caresses. Sister Therea was absent, restless, walked confusedly about, took up every thing, though she wanted nothing, knew not what to make of herself, looked out at the window, imagined she heard some one knock at the door. At last the Superior said, Saint Theresa, you may retire if you are weary.—I am not weary Madam. But I have a thousand questions to ask this girl.—I have no doubt of it.—I am anxious to learn her whole history ; how can I repair the sufferings she has been forced to undergo, if I know not what they are ? I must have her recount them to me without omitting any thing ; I am sure my heart will be torn, and that I shall weep at her story ; but no matter : Saint Susan, when are you to tell me all this?—

Madam, whenever you are pleased to desire it.—I entreat you just now, if we have time. What o'clock is it?—Madam, it is five o'clock, replied Sister Theresa, and the bell is going to ring for vespers.—Begin now however.—But Madam, you promised me a moment of consolation before vespers. I am disquieted by unpleasant thoughts, I would fain open my heart to you. If I go to service without this precaution, I shall be unable to pray; my mind will wander.—No, no, said the Superior, you are foolish with these ideas of yours. I wager I know what is the matter; we will speak of it to morrow.—Ah! dear mother, said Sister Theresa, throwing herself at the feet of the Superior, and bursting into tears, let it be just now.—Madam, said I to the Superior, rising up from her knees, on which I had continued to sit, grant my sister the favour  
she

she asks, do not allow her to remain uneasy : I will retire ; opportunities will occur to satisfy the interest you are so good to take in my fortune ; and when you have heard what Sister Theresa has to communicate, her uneasiness will vanish..... I made a motion towards the door, in order to withdraw, but the Superior detained me with one of her hands ; Sister Theresa upon her knees had taken the other, kissed it and bathed it with her tears, while the Superior said to her, In truth, St. Theresa, you are extremely troublesome with your disquietudes ; I have told you that I am displeased, that I am constrained by this conduct : I do not choose to be constrained.—I know it ; but I am not mistress of my thoughts ; I wish ardently I could controul them, but I cannot.—Meanwhile I had retired, and left the young Sister with the Superior. I could  
not

not refrain from looking at her in church: Her countenance still discovered sadness and depression. Our eyes met several times, and I thought that she could scarcely support my looks. As for the Superior, she had fallen asleep in her pew.

Service was dispatched in an instant: the choir, from what I could observe, was not the part of the house in which they were most happy. We left it with all the quickness and noise of a flock of birds just escaped from their aviary; and the Sisters separated, running, laughing, and talking one with another. The Superior shut herself up in her cell, and Sister Theresa stopped at the door of hers, watching as if curious to know what was become of me. I retired to my apartment, and Sister Theresa's door a short time after was shut very gently. It struck me that this young girl was jealous of me, and  
that

that she was afraid lest I should supplant her in the intimacy and good graces of the Superior. I observed her for some days following ; and when I had ascertained my suspicion to be well founded, from her little resentments, from her little alarms, her perseverance in tracing every step she took in examining me, in interfering between the Superior and me, in interrupting our conversations, depreciating my qualities, and exposing my faults, and still more from the paleness of her looks, the gloom of her countenance, her sighs, and the derangement of her health, and even of her mind, I went and said to her, My dear friend, what is the matter with you ?—She made me no reply ; my visit surprised and embarrassed her ; she knew neither what to say, nor what to do.—You do me injustice ; tell me, you are afraid lest

I take



I take any improper advantage of the partiality which our mother has formed for me, in order to estrange you from her affections. Be assured this is not my character : if ever I have been fortunate enough to obtain any influence over her mind. . . .—You will possess as much as you think proper ; she loves you ; she now does for you what she at first did for me.—Well ! be assured I shall avail myself of the confidence which she may place in me only for the purpose of rendering you dearer to her than ever.—And does this depend on you ?—And why will it not depend on me ?—Instead of returning me an answer, she threw herself upon my neck, and said to me with a sigh : It is not your fault, I know it well ; I say so to myself every moment ; but promise me. . . .—What do you want me to promise ?—That. . . .—Well, I'll do anything

thing in my power.—She hesitated ; she covered her eyes with her hands, and said to me in a tone of voice so low that I could scarcely hear her, That you will see her as seldom as you can. . .—This request appeared to me so strange, that I could not refrain from replying, And of what consequence is it to you, whether I see our Superior often or seldom ? It would give me no concern though you were never out of her sight, and you must not be vexed were I to be as much with her : is it not sufficient for me to protest to you, that I will neither injure you, nor any other person, in her opinion.—She made me no reply, but parting from me, and throwing herself down upon her bed, she exclaimed in accents of sorrow, I am undone !—Undone ! How ? But you will persist in thinking me the wickedest creature in the world !

We



We were in this situation when the Superior came in. She had gone to my cell, and had not found me ; she had run in quest of me through almost every part of the house, to no purpose ; it had never entered her mind that I was with Sister Saint Theresa ; when she discovered it, however, by means of those which she had sent in search of me, she hastened to the cell. There were some signs of agitation in her look, and in her countenance ; but the whole of her figure was rarely of a piece ! Saint Theresa sat in silence upon her bed, and I at the foot of it. I said to her, My dear mother, I ask your pardon for coming here without your permission. — It had been better, indeed, replied she, had you requested leave. — But this dear sister moved my compassion, I observed her uneasy. — About what ? — Shall I tell you ? and why should I not

not tell you? It is a sort of delicacy which does honour to her mind, and marks the warmth of her attachment to you. The testimonies of kindness which you have given me, have alarmed her tenderness, and she is afraid lest I obtain in your heart a preference to her; this sentiment of jealousy, so honest, so natural, and so flattering to you, my dear mother, had, I perceived, become a source of pain to my sister, and I came here to encourage her.—The Superior, after having listened to me, assumed a stern and commanding aspect, and said to her: Sister Theresa, I have loved you, and still love you; I have no ground of complaint against you, and you never shall have any against me; but I cannot suffer these exclusive pretensions. Lay them aside, as you dread forfeiting my remaining esteem: recollect the fate of Sister Agatha.....

Then

Then turning to me, she said, I mean that tall black girl, whom you have seen opposite to me in the choir. (For I lived so retired, I had so lately come to the house, and I was so little acquainted, that I did not know the names of my companions). She added, I loved her when Sister Theresa came to the house, and she naturally became an object of my attention. She felt the same sort of uneasiness, and committed the same follies; I cautioned her, but she did not correct them; and I was obliged to take some severe measures, which I have been under the necessity too long of continuing, and which are entirely foreign to my disposition; for they will tell you, that I am a person of a mild temper, and that I never inflict punishment but with reluctance. . . . Then addressing herself to Saint Theresa, she proceeded: My

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child, that I do not wish to be put under constraint, I have told you already; you know me; don't oblige me to do violence to my nature..... Then, leaning one arm upon my shoulder, she said to me, Come, Saint Susan, accompany me back to my cell. We went out. Sister Theresa wished to follow us; but the Superior, leaning her head carelessly back over my shoulders, desired her, in a tone of authority, to return to her apartment, and not to leave it without her permission.... She obeyed, violently shut the door, and let some words escape, which made the Superior tremble, I know not why, for they had no meaning. I perceived her resentment, and said to her, My dear mother, if you have any kindness for me, pardon Sister Theresa; she has forgotten herself; she knows neither what she says, nor what she does. — Do you ask me to  
forgive

forgive her? I have no inclination to do it; but what will you give me?— Ah! my dear mother, am I happy enough to have any thing which can please you, and which can appease your anger?—She cast her eyes downward, she blushed, and sighed; in truth, she looked like a lover. Then, throwing herself carelessly upon me, as if she had been in a swoon, she said: Hold your forehead near me, that I may kiss it..... I inclined myself forward, and she kissed my brow. From that time, as soon as any of the nuns committed a fault, I interceded for them, and I was sure to obtain her pardon by some innocent compliance; it was always a kiss upon the forehead, the neck, the eyes, the cheeks, the mouth, the hands, the bosom, or the arms, but most frequently on the mouth; according to her, my breath was sweet,

my teeth white, and my lips fresh and red. In truth, I should have been very pretty, had I deserved a very small portion of the praises which she lavished upon me: if it was my forehead, it was white, smooth, and of a charming form; if my eyes, they were brilliant; if my cheeks, they were large and soft; if my hands, they were small and handsome; if my bosom, it was firm, and of an exquisite shape; if my arms, it was impossible that they could be rounder or more elegantly turned; if my neck, none of the sisters had one of such extraordinary beauty; and I know not what besides. There was some truth in her praises; I have repeated a great deal of it, but not all. Sometimes, looking at me from head to foot, with an air of complacency which I had never seen in any other woman, she would say, Yes, it is the greatest blessing



blessing that God has called her to this retreat ; with such a figure in the world, she would have damned as many men as had seen her, and damned herself along with them. God orders all things well.

In the mean while we were advancing to her cell ; I shewed a disposition to leave her, but she took me by the hand, and said to me, It is too late to begin your history at Saint Mary's and at Longchamp, but come in, you will give me a short lesson upon the harpsichord. In a moment she had opened the harpsichord, got ready a book, and brought me a chair, for she was very active. I sat down. She thought that I might be cold, and taking a cushion from off one of the chairs, she put it before me, and stooping, she took my two feet and placed them upon it ; she then planted herself behind me, and

leaned upon the back of my chair. After putting the instrument in tune, I played some pieces of Couprin, of Rameau, and of Scarlatti ; in the mean time she had lifted a corner of my neckkerchief, and placed her hand upon my bare shoulder, with the extremities of her fingers upon my bosom. She sighed ; she appeared to labour under an oppression ; her bosom palpitated ; she at first pressed me hard upon the shoulder with her hand ; she then desisted ; she seemed to have lost all power, and as if she had been quite lifeless, her head fell down upon mine. In truth, she had incredible sensibility, and the finest taste for music ; I never knew any person upon whom it produced such singular effects.

We were thus amusing ourselves, in a manner equally simple and agreeable, when suddenly the door burst open



with such violence, that both I and the Superior were alarmed. It was that mad-cap Theresa. Her dress was disordered; her eyes looked wild. She examined the appearance of us both with the most particular attention; her lips quivered, and she was unable to speak. She soon recollected herself however, and threw herself at the feet of the Superior. I joined my entreaties to hers, and again obtained her pardon. But the Superior protested, in the most decided manner, that it should be the last, at least for faults of this nature; and we then withdrew together.

Returning to our cells, I said to her: Dear sister, take care, you will totally deprive yourself of the favour of the Superior. I will not abandon your interest, but you put my credit with her too severely to the proof;

and I should be afflicted beyond measure, to be no longer able to employ it in the service of you and of our companions. But by what fancies are you possessed?—To this, no answer.—What apprehensions do you entertain of me?—To this, no answer.—May not our mother feel an equal attachment to both?—No, no, said she with great emotion, that is impossible; I must soon become disgusting to her, and I shall die with grief! Ah! why did you come here? you will not long be happy, that I am sure, and I shall be for ever wretched.—But I am sensible, said I, that to have lost the favour of the Superior is a great misfortune; but I know a greater still, and that is, to have deserved it. You, however, have nothing to reproach yourself upon that subject.—Ah! would to God it were so!—If your own mind accuses you of any fault, you ought to  
repair

repair it ; and the surest way of effecting this object, is to support the punishment of it with patience.—That I cannot, I cannot ; and is it her part too to inflict the penalty ?—Her part ! Sister Theresa, her part ! is it thus you speak of a Superior ? This is not at all right ; you forget yourself. I am sure the fault you now commit, is more serious than any with which you can reproach yourself.—Ah ! would to God it were so ! she repeated ; would to God it were !.....And here we separated, she to hide herself in her cell, I to meditate in mine, upon the whimsies with which women's heads abound. Such is the consequence of seclusion. Man is born for society. Separate him from his kind, place him in an isolated state, his ideas will become distorted, his character will be reversed, a thousand absurd affections will spring up in his

his heart, his mind will teem with extravagant thoughts, as an uncultivated field is overrun with noxious weeds. Place a man in a forest, and he will become savage ; in a cloister, where the idea of compulsion is combined with that of servitude, and it is still worse. He may quit the forest, but the cloister he can never abandon. He is free in the forest, he is a slave in the cloister. It perhaps requires more strength of mind to withstand solitude than misery. Misery degrades, but seclusion depraves. Is it better to live in a state of contempt than in a state of folly ? It is a question which I shall not presume to decide ; but they both are calamities which we ought to shun.

I perceived that the tenderness which the Superior had conceived for me daily increased. I was constantly in her cell, or she in mine. For the slightest indisposition

disposition she ordered me to receive the benefit of the infirmary, she dispensed with my performances of duties, she sent me early to bed, or excused me from rising to matins. In the choir, in the refectory, at recreation, she contrived to shew me marks of friendship. In the choir, if any verse occurred which contained a sentiment of tenderness and affection, she would sing it, addressing herself to me ; or, if it was sung by another, she fixed her looks upon me with a particular expression. In the refectory, she always sent me a part of the greatest delicacy with which she herself was served. At recreation, she would embrace me round the waist, and say the softest and most obliging things. She never received a present in which I did not participate ; sugar, coffee, liqueurs, snuff, linen, napkins, in short, whatever it was.

was. She stripped her own cell of prints, utensils, furniture, and an infinite number of agreeable or convenient articles, in order to embellish mine. I could scarcely be absent a moment, but on my return I found myself enriched by some new present. When I went to her cell to express my thanks, she felt a joy which it is impossible to describe; she embraced, caressed me, took me upon her knees, talked to me of the most secret concerns of the house; and, if I loved her, she promised herself a life a thousand times more happy than she could have enjoyed in the world. Then she would stop, and gaze upon me with languishing eyes, and say: Sister Susan, do you love me?—How is it possible that I should not love you? If I did not, my heart must be ungrateful indeed.—True.—You are so good!—Say, rather,

so



so fond of you... Saying this, she fixed her eyes upon the ground, she embraced me more ardently with the hand that encircled my waist; she sighed, she trembled; she seemed as if she had been desirous to communicate to me some secret which she was afraid to reveal. Tears streamed from her eyes, while she said to me, Ah ! Sister Susan, you do not love me.—I do not love you, dear mother !—No.—Tell me then what I must do to prove it.—You must guess that.—I reflect, but nothing occurs to my mind. (1) \*\*\*\*\*

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My

(1) It was the object of Diderot, to bring monastic institutions into detestation, by painting the extravagant shapes which the passions assume, when the intentions of nature are disregarded. In the character of the Superior, he has described their effects upon a mind of strong sensibility.

My cell was almost opposite to that of Saint Theresa, and when I returned from the Superior her door was open. She expected me. She stopped me, and said: Ah! Saint Susan, you come from our mother's apartment?—Yes, said I.—You have staid there a long while.—As long as she wished me.—This is not what you promised me!—I made you no promise.—Durst you tell me, however, what passed there?..... Although my conscience reproached me with nothing, I will yet confess to you, Sir, that I was embarrassed by her

sensibility. The translator, however, hopes he will be excused if he forbears to shock an English reader with details, which, though calculated to expose vice, it may, perhaps, be more prudent to conceal from the eye of modesty. The French writers too, in this respect, are permitted a latitude which the English taste has forbidden.

her question. She perceived it, and urged me to tell her, till at last I replied : Dear sister, perhaps you will not trust my account, but you will probably believe that of our dear mother, and I will request her to inform you.—My dear Saint Susan, said she, with eagerness, beware of that; surely you do not wish to render me wretched; she would never pardon my curiosity; you are not acquainted with her character; she is capable of passing from the greatest tenderness to the extreme of ferocity; I know not to what extent I should experience her indignation. Promise me never to mention to her a word of this.—Do you seriously make that request? —I ask it upon my knees. I am afflicted beyond measure; I see clearly that I must summon resolution to submit, and I will exert it. Promise me to mention nothing of this  
to

to her..... —I raised her up, and gave her my word. She was satisfied with this pledge, and with reason. We then withdrew, she to her cell, I to mine.

After returning to my apartment, I found myself thoughtful; I attempted to pray, but could not. I endeavoured to be busy. I began one piece of work, which I laid aside for another; I again quitted this for a third; my hands refused their service, and I appeared quite enfeebled; never had I experienced a similar situation; my eyelids closed of themselves; I fell into a short slumber, although I never slept in the day-time. When I awoke, I questioned my own mind upon what had passed between the Superior and me; I examined myself; and even now, when I subject myself to this examination, I think I can discover..... but the ideas  
which

which suggested themselves, were so vague, so fantastic, so ridiculous, that I rejected them with disdain. The result of my reflections was, that it was some malady to which she was subject. I next imagined, that perhaps the malady was infectious, that it had seized St. Theresa, and that I also should feel its attack.

Next morning, after matins, our Superior said to me: Saint Susan, to-day I hope to be made acquainted with all your adventures; come... I went along with her. She placed me in her arm chair by the side of her bed, and she seated herself upon a chair that was a little lower. She was below me, because I am taller, and I was also upon a higher seat. We were close together, her elbows leaning upon the bed. After a short interval of silence, I began: Although I am young, I have

experienced a great deal of suffering. It will soon be twenty years since I came into the world, and the twenty years of my life, mark also the period of my miseries. I don't know whether I am able to tell you all, though you were disposed to hear it. My history is one melancholy train of misery ; misery in the house of my parents, misery in the convent of Saint Mary, miseries in the convent of Longchamp, miseries in every situation ; where, dear mother, am I to begin ?—Begin with the very first.—But, dear mother, said I, that will be a very long and a very sad story, and I should be unwilling to wound your heart so much with sorrowful events.—Fear not, I am fond of weeping ; tears are accompanied with many delightful sensations to a mind of sensibility. You should like to weep too ; you will wipe away  
my



my tears, and I will wipe away yours ; and, perhaps, we shall be happy in the very middle of the story of your sufferings : who knows to what point the feelings of tenderness may carry us ?... Saying these words, she looked up to me with eyes already moistened ; she took my two hands, and drew me nearer to her, till we touched each other. Begin your narration, my child, said she, I am all expectation ; I feel within me a disposition tremblingly alive to tenderness ; never in my whole life have I felt my heart more sympathising and more affectionate..... I began my story nearly as I have now related it in writing to you. It is impossible for me to describe the effects which it produced upon her feelings ; the sighs she breathed, the tears she shed, the expressions of indignation she uttered against my cruel parents, against the unrelenting nuns

of Saint Mary's and Longchamp. I should be extremely sorry that the least of the evils she imprecated upon their heads, should overtake them. I should not wish to hurt a hair of the head of my bitterest enemy. From time to time she interrupted me, walked through the room, and again resumed her place. Again she would raise her eyes and her hands to heaven, and then conceal her head between my knees. When I spoke of the scenes of the dungeon, of my exorcism, of the ignominious punishment to which I was subjected upon the loss of my suit, she cried aloud; when I finished my narration I was silent, and she remained some time leaning upon the bed, her face hid in the clothes, and her arms extended above her head. Dear mother, then said I, I entreat your pardon for the pain I have occasioned you; I warned  
you

you against it, and I only submitted to your own desire.... She answered only with these words: Wicked creatures! horrible creatures! It is in convents alone that humanity can be so completely extinguished. When hatred is combined with habitual malignity of temper, it is impossible to say to what length cruelty may be carried. Happily I am of a kind disposition, I love all my nuns. They have all, in a greater or less degree, formed themselves upon my character, and they entertain a mutual affection for each other. But how could this delicate constitution resist so many torments? How were not all these little members irreparably injured? How did this delicate frame escape being destroyed? How were not the lustre of these eyes extinguished by so many tears? Cruel wretches! to bind these arms with

cords !.... and she took my arms and  
 kissed them..... To drown these eyes  
 in tears !.... and she kissed them....  
 To extort groans and sighs from that  
 mouth !... and she kissed it.... To con-  
 demn that serene and beauteous coun-  
 tenance to veil itself continually in  
 clouds and sorrow !... and she kissed  
 it..... To wither the roses on these  
 cheeks !... and she pinched them with  
 her fingers, and kissed them.... To  
 violate that head ! tear that hair ! load  
 that brow with anxiety !..... and she  
 kissed my head, my brow, my hair.....  
 To dare encircle that neck with cords,  
 and tear these shoulders with sharp  
 points !..... and she kissed them \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \*. We remained in silence a good  
 while, till at last the Superior observed:  
 Susan, from what you say of your first  
 Superior, I imagine she must have  
 been

been very dear to you. — Very dear, indeed. — She did not love you better than I do, but she was more beloved... You give me no answer? — I was wretched, and she soothed my sorrows. But whence arises your repugnance to the religious life? Susan, you have not told me all. — Pardon me, Madam, I have indeed. — What! it is impossible, lovely as you are, (for, my child, you are most lovely — you cannot conceive how very much) that no person has told you so. — I have been told so. — And he who has told you was not disagreeable to you? — No. — And you conceived no attachment to him? — Not the least. — What! your heart has never been touched? — Never. — What! there was no passion, either secret or disapproved by your parents, that inspired your aversion to the convent? Confide your secret to me, I am indulgent. — I have

no secret of that kind, dear mother, to entrust you with. — But, once more, whence arises your repugnance to the religious life? — From the life itself. I hate its duties, its employments; I detest seclusion and constraint; I think myself destined for another situation. — But, upon what foundation does that idea appear to rest? — Upon the disgust with which I am overwhelmed; I am dissatisfied, I am discontented with my situation. — Even here? — Yes, dear mother, even here; in spite of all the kindness you have shown me. — But, is it because you are conscious of certain emotions, certain desires? — I have none. — I believe it; you seem to be of a tranquil character. — Very much so. — Even cold. — I don't know. — You are not acquainted with the world? — Very little. — What attractions then can it possess for you? — That I do not myself exactly



exactly comprehend ; but, certainly, such must exist. — Is it liberty that you regret ? — Probably, and many other things beside. — And pray what may these other things be ? My friend, open your heart freely to me ; would you wish to be married ? — I should prefer it to my present situation, that is certain. — On what is that preference founded ? — I do not know. — You do not know ! but, tell me what impression does the presence of a man communicate ? — None : if he is a man of sense, and speaks well, I listen to him with pleasure ; if he is handsome, I remark his figure. — And your heart remains tranquil ? — Hitherto it has experienced no emotion. — What ! when they have fixed their ardent glances on yours, you never felt..... — Sometimes embarrassment ; I was obliged to turn my eyes to the ground. — And without any trouble ?

trouble? — None. — And your senses said nothing? — I am unacquainted with the language of the senses. — They have a language of their own however. — Very possibly. — And you are unacquainted with it? — Perfectly. — — — What! you. . . . It is a delightful language; would you wish to know it? — — — No, my dear mother, what advantage should I derive from the knowledge? — — — It would dissipate your dissatisfaction. — — — Perhaps increase it. And besides, what avails that language without an object? — — — When we speak, it is always to some one; that, doubtless, is better than to confine ourselves to solitary entertainment, though not unaccompanied with pleasure. — — — I do not at all understand the subject. — — — If you please, my dear child, I will explain myself more clearly. — — — No, dear mother, no. I am ignorant, and I prefer that situation, to the acquisition

5

quisition

quisition of knowledge that would render me, perhaps, more wretched than I am. I have no desires, nor do I wish to discover such as I cannot gratify.---And why can you not?---And how can I?---How very innocent she is!---True; I am, dear mother, and I would die a thousand deaths rather than cease to be so.... I know not what unpleasant circumstance these last words might seem to her to contain, but she suddenly changed countenance, she became serious and embarrassed. Her hand, which she had laid upon one of my knees, ceased to press me, and was then withdrawn. She remained with her eyes fixed upon the ground.---My dear mother, said I, what have I done? Can any thing offend you that has escaped my lips? forgive me. I exercise the liberty you have allowed me; none of the observations I make to  
you

you are studied ; and though I were to prepare them, I should express them no otherwise, perhaps worse. ' The subject upon which we converse is so very strange ! pardon me. . . . Saying these words, I threw my arms round her neck, and leant my head upon her shoulder. She threw hers round me, and pressed me very tenderly. We remained in this posture a few moments ; then resuming her tenderness, and her serenity, Susan, said she, do you sleep well ? --- Very well, said I, especially of late. --- Is your sleep uninterrupted ? --- Most commonly. --- When your slumbers are broken, how are your thoughts employed ? --- Upon my past life, and upon my future prospects ; I pray, or I weep, I can't tell ? --- And in the morning, when you awake early ? --- I rise. --- Whenever you awake ? --- Whenever I awake. --- You are not fond then of indulging

dulging your fancy? --- No.---Of re-  
posing upon your pillow?---No.---Of  
enjoying the genial warmth of the  
bed?---No.---Never?....\*\*\*\*\*

I do not know what farther conver-  
sation we had, when a message was  
brought that she was wanted in the  
parlour. I thought I perceived that  
this visit caused her a good deal of  
chagrin, and that she would have much  
rather preferred to have remained chat-  
ting with me, although our conversation  
was not deserving of much regret. We  
separated however.

The community had at no time been  
happier, than since I became a member  
of it. The Superior seemed to have  
lost the inequality of her character; it  
was observed that I had fixed her ca-  
pricious temper. To please me, she  
even gave several days of recreation,  
and what are called festivals. Upon  
these

these days the entertainment is a little better than ordinary, the services are likewise curtailed, and the intervals between them are allowed for recreation. But this happy period was destined to pass away, both for others and for me.

Disquietude began to prey upon the heart of the Superior; her person wasted away, she lost her gaiety, her sleep vanished. The night which succeeded our last conversation, when sleep had closed every eye, and silence reigned in the house, she rose. After wandering some time through the passages, she came to my cell; I was in a light slumber; I thought I heard her; she stopped, as she leant her head upon my door, she seemed to make sufficient noise to awake me, although I had been asleep. I remained silent, I imagined I heard the voice of some one  
uttering



uttering moans, of some one breathing sighs. At first I was seized with a slight shivering of horror; I then determined to say *Ave*. Instead of returning any answer, the person glided lightly away. Some time after, the visit was repeated: again I heard the sound of sighs and moans; I again repeated *Ave*, and a second time the person retired. I summoned up my courage, and by and by fell asleep. While I was asleep the same person entered, sat down by my bed-side, drew my curtain with one hand, and in the other held a candle, the light of which beamed upon my countenance, while she who carried it, gazed on me as I slept; such, at least, was the conclusion I formed from her attitude when I opened my eyes. This person was the Superior. I suddenly started up. She perceived my fright, and said, Susan, be

be not alarmed, it is I..... I dropped my head again upon my pillow, and said, Dear mother, what has brought you here at this time of night? What is the purpose of this visit? Why are you not now asleep?---I cannot sleep, replied she, it will be a long while ere I sleep. I am tormented by frightful dreams. No sooner have I shut my eyes, than the sufferings you have endured, paint themselves anew to my imagination; I behold you in the hands of those inhuman wretches, I see your hair dishevelled, your feet gored, the torch in your hand, the cord round your neck; I think they are about to take your life; I tremble, I shudder with horror, a cold perspiration covers my whole body; I wish to fly to your assistance, I cry out; I awake, and in vain await the return of sleep. Such has been my situation this night.

I feared

I feared that heaven thus announced to me some misfortune which had befallen my friend ; I arose, I came to your door, I listened, I thought you were not asleep, you spoke, and I retired ; I returned, you again spoke, and again I withdrew. I returned a third time ; and when I thought you were asleep, I entered. I have been at your side some time, and was afraid to awake you ; I hesitated at first whether I should draw the curtains, from a fear of interrupting your repose ; I intended to go away, but I could not resist the desire of seeing if my dear Susan was well. I gazed upon you. How lovely a sight do you present, even when you sleep ! — My dear mother, how kind you are ! — I feel myself affected by the cold, but I know that I have nothing disagreeable to apprehend for my friend, and I believe I shall sleep. Give me

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your

your hand.—I presented it to her.—  
How calm is her pulse! how equal!  
No passion agitates her frame!—I have  
enjoyed a very peaceable slumber.—  
How happy are you!—Dear mother,  
you continue to expose yourself to the  
cold.—You are right; adieu, my lovely  
friend, adieu; I am going away. She  
did not go, however, but continued to  
gaze upon me; while two tears dropped  
from her eyes. Dear mother, said I,  
what is the matter with you? you weep;  
how sorry am I to have talked to you  
of my sufferings!.....\* \* \* \* \* Are  
you ill? dear mother, said I, what  
must I do?—I tremble, said she, I  
shudder, a mortal coldness possesses  
my whole body.—Do you wish me to  
rise, and resign you my place?—No,  
said she, it would not be necessary for  
you to rise; raise the bed-clothes  
only a little, that I may warm myself  
beside

beside you, and remove my indisposition.—Dear mother, said I, but that is forbidden. What would be said of it, were it known? In the convent of St. Mary, a nun happened to go by night to the cell of another, her particular friend; and I cannot repeat to you all the censures which it occasioned. The Director sometimes has asked me if any person had ever proposed to come and sleep beside me, and he seriously enjoined me never to allow it to be done. I have even spoken to him of your caresses. In my opinion they are innocent, but he considers them in a different light. I don't know how I came to forget his advice; I intended to speak to you on the subject.—My dear friend, all around us are asleep, no one shall know of it. It is my province to reward and to punish; and let the Director say what he will, I see no

harm in one friend admitting beside her a friend, whom apprehensions have alarmed; who has awoke, and come during the night, in spite of the inclemency of the season, to see whether or not her dearly-beloved is in danger. Susan, have you never shared the same bed in the house of your parents, with one of your sisters?—No, never.—If the occasion for doing it had occurred, would you not have agreed to it without scruple? If your sister, disquieted with apprehensions, and benumbed with cold, had asked a place beside you, would you have refused?—I believe not.—And am not I your dear mother?—Yes, you are, but that is forbidden.—My dear friend, it is by me it is prohibited to others, and it is I who permit, who even require it of you. Let me warm myself one moment, and I will go away. Give me your hand..... I gave  
it



it her. Hold, said she, feel, observe; I tremble, I shudder, I am cold as marble.... And indeed it was true. Oh! dear mother, your health will suffer in consequence of this. But, stop, I will turn to one side, and place you in the warm place..... I adjusted myself on one side, I lifted up the clothes, and she took my place. Oh, how ill she was! A general tremor shook every member of her body; she attempted to speak, she endeavoured to approach me, but she could neither articulate nor stir. In a feeble tone she said to me, Susan, my dear, come a little nearer to me..... She stretched out her arms. I turned my back to her. She gently took hold of me, and drew me towards her. She placed one arm under and another over me, and said: I am frozen; I am so cold, that I am afraid of touching you for fear of hurting you.—Dear mother,

never fear.—Then she put one of her hands upon my breast, and another round my waist. Her feet were placed under mine, and I pressed them in order to warm them, while the dear mother said to me : Ah ! my dear friend, see how soon my feet have recovered warmth when nothing interposes between them and yours.—But, said I, may you not warm your whole body in the same manner?—Yes, if you please. I had turned round, when, suddenly, two violent knocks were heard at the door. Terrified at the noise, I instantly leaped out of bed on the one side, and the Superior on the other. We listened, and heard some one on tip-toe return to the neighbouring cell. Ah ! said I, it is Sister Theresa, who has seen you go along the passage, and enter my apartment. She must have listened and overheard our conversation. What will she

she say?..... I was more dead than alive.—Yes, it is she, said the Superior, in an irritated tone, it is she, I have no doubt; but I hope she will long remember her temerity. — Ah! dear mother, said I, do her no harm.— Susan, said she to me, adieu, good night; go to bed, sleep well; I give you a dispensation from morning prayers. I will go to that strange girl. Give me your hand... I stretched out my hand from one side of the bed to the other; she lifted the sleeve which covered the arm, and kissed it with a sigh, and she went away, protesting that the rash girl who had dared to trouble her, should remember it. I immediately leant towards the side of my bed next the door, and listened. She went to Sister Theresa's apartment. I had a strong inclination to rise and interpose between her and the Superior, if any

violent scene happened to ensue ; but I was so troubled, my feelings were so unpleasant, that I preferred lying still in bed ; I could not sleep ; however, I thought that I was about to become the topic of conversation in the house ; that this adventure, which in itself was very simple, would be related with the most unfavourable circumstances ; that it would give rise to calumnies still worse than those I was exposed to at Longchamp, when I was accused of crimes of which I am ignorant ; that our fault would come to the knowledge of the Superiors ; that our mother would be deposed, and that both of us would be severely punished. I still, however, kept my ears upon the watch, with impatience, till our mother should leave Theresa's cell. This affair seemed difficult to accommodate, for she spent there almost the whole night. How I pitied

pitied her! She was only covered with her shift, and chilled with cold, and trembling with resentment.

In the morning I had a strong desire to avail myself of the permission she had given me, and to remain in bed. It occurred to me, however, that I ought not to do so. I dressed myself in haste, and was the first at the choir, where the Superior and Saint Theresa did not appear; a circumstance at which I was highly pleased; in the first place, because I should have had no small difficulty to support the looks of this sister without embarrassment; and in the second place, since she had obtained permission to be absent from service, she had in all probability obtained forgiveness, which would not be granted but upon conditions calculated to render my mind perfectly easy. I guessed right. No sooner was service over, than

than the Superior sent for me. I went and saw her. She was still in bed, and seemed depressed. I have been very ill, said she, I have not slept at all; Saint Theresa is out of her senses; if she does such a thing again, I will confine her.—Ah! dear mother, said I, do not think of confining her.—That will depend upon her own conduct. She has promised to behave better, and I hope she will keep her word. And you, dear Susan, how are you?—Well, dear mother.—Have you enjoyed any repose?—Very little.—I was told that you were at the choir; why did you not remain in bed? I should not have found myself easy there; and besides, I thought it was better....—No, there would have been no harm, although you had not gone out. But I feel some inclination to sleep; I advise you to go and do the same in your cell, unless you prefer accepting

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cepting a place beside me.—Dear mother, I am infinitely obliged to you; I am accustomed to lie alone, and I could not sleep along with another.—Go then. I will not go down to the refectory to dinner. I shall be served here, and perhaps I may not rise all day.—You will come along with some others whom I have invited.—And is Sister Saint Theresa to be here, said I?—No, she replied.—I am not sorry for that.—And why?—I don't know, I seem as if I were afraid to meet her.—Courage, my child; I will answer for it, that she is more afraid of you than you have reason to be of her.

I left the room, and went to bed myself. In the afternoon I repaired to the Superior's apartment, where I found a pretty numerous company of nuns, the youngest and handsomest in the house. The rest had paid their visits and retired.

retired. I assure you, Sir, who are yourself a judge of painting, that the assemblage presented a very agreeable picture. Conceive to yourself a group of between ten and twelve persons, the youngest of which might be about fifteen, and the oldest not twenty-three ; a Superior bordering upon forty, fair, ruddy, plump, half raised up in her bed, with a double chin, which became her extremely ; arms round as if they had been turned ; fingers taper and interspersed with dimples ; two black eyes, large, lively and tender, seldom quite open, half shut, as if she to whom they belonged had felt some difficulty in opening them ; lips that displayed the vermillion of the rose ; teeth white as milk ; the most beautiful cheeks ; a very pleasing head, sunk in a pillow of down ; her arms extended carelessly by her sides, and little cushions  
to

to support her elbows. I was seated on the edge of the bed, doing nothing; another in an arm chair, with a small embroidery frame upon her knee. Others, near the windows, were employed in working lace. Some were seated on the ground, upon the cushions they had taken from the chairs, sewing, embroidering, or spinning on small wheels. Some were fair, others brown; no one resembled another, though all were beautiful. Their characters were as various as their physiognomies. Some were serene, others sprightly, others serious, sad or melancholy. They were all engaged in some kind of work, as I have mentioned, except myself. It was not difficult to discover who were friends, who indifferent, and who enemies. The friends were placed beside or opposite to each other. As they worked, they talked, they consulted; they

they looked by stealth at each other, and pressed each others fingers, on pretence of lending a needle, a pin, or the scissars. The Superior surveyed them all ; she blamed one for assiduity, another for idleness ; this for her indifference, that for her sadness ; she made them bring her their work ; she praised or blamed ; she adjusted the head-dress of one. . . . That veil comes too much forward. . . . That cap encroaches too much upon the face, it does not display enough of your cheeks. . . . These folds have a bad effect. . . . And upon all she bestowed either slight reproofs or little endearments.

While we were thus employed, I heard a gentle knock at the door, and I went to it. Saint Susan, said the Superior, you will return.—Yes, dear mother.—Do not fail, for I have something of importance to communicate to you.

you.—I come back this moment.... It was poor Saint Theresa. She remained a few moments without speaking, and so did I ; at last, Dear sister said I, is it I you wish to see ?—Yes.—In what manner can I be of service to you ?—I will tell you. I have fallen into disgrace with the Superior. I thought she had forgiven me, and I had some reason to think so ; yet you are all assembled in her apartment, I am not of the party, and have received orders to remain in my cell.—Do you wish to join us ?—Yes.—Are you anxious that I should solicit permission for you ?—Yes.—Stop there, my dear friend ; I will go for that purpose.—Sincerely, will you speak to her in my favour ?—Certainly ; why should I refuse to promise you so, and why should I not fulfil my promise after it is given ?—Ah ! said she, gazing tenderly upon me, I forgive, I forgive her

her the attachment she has conceived to you ; you possess every charm, a beautiful mind as well as a lovely form. . . . I was transported to have it in my power to confer upon her this little piece of service. I re-entered the room. In my absence another had taken my place on the side of the Superior's bed. She was leaning forwards, her two elbows supported upon the cushions, showing her work. The Superior, with eyes almost shut, said yes and no, almost without looking at it ; and I was standing by her side before she perceived me. She soon recovered, however, from this slight fit of absence. She who had taken my place resigned it to me ; I resumed my seat, and then leaning gently towards the Superior, who had raised herself a little upon the pillow, I preserved silence ; but I looked at her with an expression that seemed desirous to ask her  
some



some favour. Well, said she, what is the matter? Speak, what is it you wish? Do you think it possible for me to refuse any thing you ask?—Sister Saint Theresa. . . .—I understand; I am much dissatisfied with her, but Saint Susan intercedes, and I grant her pardon. Go, tell her she may come in.—I ran to find her. The poor dear sister waited at the door. I told her to advance. She did so, trembling, and with downcast eyes; she held a long piece of muslin fixed to a frame, which dropped from her hands at the first step. I gathered it up, took her by the hand, and led her to the Superior. She knelt down upon her knees, took one of her hands, which she kissed, sighed, and dropped a tear. She then took one of mine, joined it to the Superior's, and kissed them both. The Superior made a sign to her to rise and place herself

wherever she pleased. She obeyed. A collation was served up. The Superior rose ; she did not sit down to table along with us, but she walked round, laying her hand upon the head of one, gently turning it back and kissing her brow ; lifting the neckkerchief of another, placing her hand upon her bosom, and leaning on the back of the chair ; passing to a third, embracing her with one hand carelessly thrown round her neck, or laying it on her mouth ; tasting, with the tip of her lips, the delicacies that were served up, and then distributing them among her favourites. After going round in this manner awhile, she stopped opposite to me, surveying me with looks of affection and tenderness. The rest of the nuns, especially 'Sister Saint Theresa, had fixed their eyes upon the ground, as if fearful of constraining or withdrawing her attention. The collation being finished,

nished,

nished, I sat down to the harpsichord, and accompanied two Sisters, who sung without method, but with taste, correctness, and voice. I sung also, and accompanied myself. The Superior was seated at the foot of the harpsichord, and seemed to enjoy the most exquisite pleasure in seeing and hearing me. The rest stood and listened, without doing any thing, or resumed their work. The evening was spent very delightfully. When it was over, all retired.

I was going away with the rest, but the Superior stopped me. What o'clock is it? said she to me.—Just six.—Some of our discreet Sisters are coming. I have reflected upon what you told me of your departure from Longchamp. I have communicated to them my ideas upon the subject, which have received their approbation, and we have a proposal to make you. . . .—At six o'clock

these discreet ladies appeared ; the discretion that is to be found in religious houses, is always very old and very decrepid. I rose ; they sat down ; and the Superior said to me, Sister Saint Susan, did you not inform me that you owe to the kindness of M. Manouri the dowry with which you were established here ?—Yes, dear mother.—I am then correct ; and the Sisters of Longchamp have remained in possession of the dowry you paid them when you entered the house ?—Yes, dear mother. — They allow you no annuity ?—No, dear mother.—That is unjust. This is the circumstance which I have communicated to these ladies, and they are of opinion with me, that you have a right either to sue them for restitution of that dowry, to be applied to the use of our house, or for the interest of it. What you derive from the solicitude

M. Manouri

M. Manouri has displayed for your happiness, is perfectly distinct from the claims you have upon the Sisters of Longchamp. It was not to acquit them of the obligation, that he furnished you the dowry.—I do not believe that he did; but the shortest way to ascertain the point, is to write to him.---Certainly.—But in case his answer be such as we wish, the following are the proposals we have to make to you. We institute the action in your name against the house of Longchamp; ours will pay the expence, which will not be very considerable, because in all probability M. Manouri will not refuse to undertake the conduct of the business; and and if we gain, the house will share equally with you the capital or the interest. What is your opinion, dear sister? You make no answer, you seem thoughtful.—I am thinking that the Sisters of Longchamp have done me

much evil, and I should be sorry were they to imagine that I wished for revenge.—Revenge is out of the question; the matter is to reclaim what is your just right.---Present myself again a public spectacle!---That is the least inconvenience; you will scarce ever be mentioned. And besides, this community is poor, and that of Longchamp is rich. You will be our benefactress, at least as long as you live; we do not require that motive to interest us in your preservation, we all love you.... And then all these discreet ladies whom she had brought to the consultation exclaimed together, And who would not love her? She is perfect.... Every moment I am in danger of being cut off; another Superior would not perhaps entertain for you the same sentiments that I do; ah! no surely she would not. You may have little indispositions, little wants; it is very pleasant



pleasant to have some money which you can apply either to render you comfortable, or to confer kindness upon others. ---Dear mother, said I, these considerations are not to be neglected, since you have the goodness to suggest them; there are others which touch me more, but there is no point of repugnance which I am not prepared to sacrifice to you. The only favour I have to ask of you, dear mother, is to take no steps till you have conversed with M. Manouri in my presence. ---Nothing is more proper. Will you write to him yourself? ---Just as you please, dear mother. ---Write to him then; and that we may not be obliged to go over the subject a second time, (for I am not fond of that kind of business, it teases me to death), write to him immediately. ---I instantly got pen, ink and paper; I entreated M. Manouri to be so good as

take a journey to Arpajon, as soon as business would permit; that I again had need of his advice and assistance in an affair of some importance, &c. The council assembled, read and approved this letter, and it was dispatched.

M. Manouri came a few days after. The Superior explained to him the question. Without a moment's hesitation he assented to her opinion. My scruples were treated as absurd. It was determined that the nuns of Longchamp should be summoned next day. They were summoned accordingly; and in spite of all I could do, my name again appeared in memorials, in cases, in public hearings, and that with details, insinuations and falsehoods, and every kind of foul aspersion that could render a cause unfavourable in the opinion of the Judges, and odious in the eyes of the world. But, Sir, is it really the  
privilege

privilege of advocates to calumniate as much as they please? Is there no justice to be obtained among them? Could I have foreseen all the vexations which this suit was to involve, I protest to you that I would not have consented to its being undertaken. They were careful to send to several nuns of our house the pieces which were published against me. Every moment they came to enquire into the details of horrible events, which had not the shadow of truth. The more I appeared ignorant, the more I was deemed guilty. Because I explained nothing, and denied nothing, they believed it all to be true. They made oblique, but very offensive observations. They shrugged their shoulders at my innocence. I wept, I was afflicted beyond measure.

But calamity never comes single. The time of confession arrived. I had  
already

already accused myself of the first caresses which the Superior had bestowed upon me, and the Director had most expressly prohibited me from yielding to them in future. But how is it possible to refuse favours, which are attended with the highest pleasure to another on whom you are entirely dependant, and in which you yourself are not conscious of any criminality ?

The Director, having a conspicuous part to perform in the sequel of these memoirs, I conceive it will not be improper to acquaint you with his character.

He is a Cordelier, and his name is Father Lemoine. He is not above forty years of age. He possesses one of the finest physiognomies in the world. It is mild, serene, open, sprightly, agreeable, when he is not at pains to modify its appearance ; but when he is  
anxious

anxious to adjust his countenance, his brow becomes wrinkled, he knits his eye-brows, fixes his eyes upon the ground, and infuses an austerity into his whole carriage. I don't know two men more different than Father Lemoine at the altar, and Father Lemoine in the parlour ; and Father Lemoine in the parlour alone, and in company. Indeed this feature is common to the character of all religious persons whatever. I have even frequently caught myself when going to the grate, stopping short, adjusting my veil, my cap, composing my countenance, my eyes, my mouth, my hands, my arms, my carriage, and assuming a borrowed modesty and demeanour, which continued longer or shorter, according to the persons with whom I had to converse. Father Lemoine is tall, handsome, gay, and extremely amiable, when he is easy ;

easy ; his elocution is admirable. In the house to which he belongs he has the reputation of a profound theologian ; and in the world, that of a great preacher. His conversation is enchanting. He is a man possessed of an infinite variety of knowledge unconnected with his profession. He has an exquisite voice ; he is skilled in music, history and languages. He is a Doctor of the Sorbonne. Although he is young, he has passed through all the principal dignities of his Order. I believe him to be free from intrigue and ambition ; he is beloved by his associates. He solicited the place of Superior of the house of Etampes as a tranquil situation, where he could apply himself without avocations to some studies which he had begun, and he succeeded in his application. It is a point of great importance  
for



for a religious house to make a proper choice of a confessor. They ought to have as a director, a man of importance and distinction. Every exertion was made by the house of Arpajon to obtain Father Lemoine; and they obtained him, at least in the capacity of extraordinary director.

The carriage belonging to the house was dispatched for him on the eve of the grand festivals, and he came. It was entertaining to see the agitation which his expected arrival produced through the whole community; what joy it excited! how the nuns shut themselves up! how they laboured to prepare themselves for his examination! how they studied to occupy him as long as possible.

It was on the eve of the feast of Pentecost that he was expected. I was uneasy; the Superior observed it, and spoke

spoke to me on the subject. I did not conceal from her the cause of my anxiety : she appeared still more alarmed at the circumstance than I was, although she did every thing in her power to dissemble her apprehension. She treated Father Lemoine as a fantastic character ; ridiculed his scruples ; asked me if Father Lemoine knew more with regard to the innocence of her sentiments and mine, than our own consciences ; and whether mine gave me any reproaches. I answered that it did not. Very well then, said she, I am your Superior, you are bound to obey me ; and I command you not to speak to him of these foolish things. You need not go to confession, if you have nothing but trifles to reveal.

Father Lemoine, however, arrived ; and I was preparing for confession while he was already occupied with the nuns  
who

who had been most forward to engage him. My turn was coming; when the Superior came to me, drew me aside, and said, Saint Susan, I have reflected upon what you told me; return to your cell, I wish you not to go to confession to day.—And why, dear mother? replied I.—To-morrow is a great day; it is the day of general communion: what thoughts do you imagine will be entertained of me, if I am the only person that does not approach the Holy Table?—No matter; let them say what they please, but you shall not go to confession.—Dear mother, said I, if you really love me, do not subject me to that mortification; I entreat it as a favour.—No, no; you will occasion me some quarrel with that man, a circumstance I am desirous to avoid.—No, dear mother, I will cause you none.—Promise me then.... O, it is unnecessary;

sary ; to-morrow morning you will come to my chamber, and accuse yourself to me ; you have committed no fault for which I cannot assure you of reconciliation, and give you absolution ; you will then communicate with the rest. Go. . . .—I then withdrew, and remained in my cell, sad, uneasy, pensive, not knowing what course to follow, whether I should go to Father Lemoine, in spite of the Superior, whether I should content myself with her absolution next day, whether I should perform my devotions with the rest of the house, or abstain from the Sacrament, in spite of all the observations that could be made. I was in this state of mind when the Superior entered. She had been at confession ; and Father Lemoine had asked why I had not appeared, and if I was sick ? I know not what answer she returned ; but the end of the business was, that

that he waited me at the confessional. Go then, said she, since it must be so, but assure me that you will be secret. I hesitated; she insisted: Ha ! foolish girl, said she, what harm would you have to be in concealing what there is no harm in committing ?—And what harm is there, then, in telling it, replied I ?—None, but there is inconvenience. Who knows the importance which this man may attach to it ? Give me then an assurance. . . . I again hesitated, but at last I pledged myself to say nothing, if he did not question me, and went to confess.

I confessed, and was silent upon the subject; but the director questioned me, and I dissembled nothing. He proposed a thousand singular questions, of which I understand not a word, even at present, when I recall them to my remembrance. He treated me with in-

dulgence; but he expressed himself against the Superior in terms that made me shudder; he called her base, profligate, perjured nun; corrupt pernicious woman; and enjoined me, under pain of being guilty of a deadly sin, never to be alone with her, and to suffer none of her caresses.---But, my father, she is my Superior, she may enter my apartment, and call me to hers, whenever she pleases.---I know it, I know it, and it afflicts me beyond measure. Dear child, said he, praised be God who has hitherto preserved you! Without venturing to explain myself more clearly, from a fear of becoming an accomplice of your base Superior, and blasting by the poisoned breath, which, in spite of my care, might issue from my lips, a delicate flower, which is never preserved fresh and without stain till your age but by the particular protection



tection of Providence, I command you to shun your Superior, to spurn her endearments, never to enter her chamber alone, to shut your door against her, especially during the night, to quit your bed if she enters your room, in spite of her opposition, to go into the passage, if necessary, to call for help, to descend, naked as you are, to the very foot of the altar, to fill the house with your cries, and to do every thing which the love of God and a hatred of guilt, the sanctity of your situation, and the interest of your salvation could inspire, were Satan himself to appear and assail you. Yes, my child, it is under this aspect that I am constrained to represent your Superior. She is plunged in the abyss of guilt ; she endeavours to precipitate you into it likewise ; and perhaps you might already have been there along with her, if your innocence had not fil-

led her with terror, and compelled her to stop. . . . Then raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, My God, continue to protect this child. . . . Pronounce along with me, *Satana, vade retro ; apage, Satana*. If this wretch examine you, tell her all, repeat to her my conversation ; say to her, that it would have been better if she had never been born, or that she would by a violent death precipitate herself into the infernal gulph.—But, my father, replied I, you have but just now heard her confession !—He returned me no answer ; but breathing a profound sigh, he laid one of his hands upon the arm of the confessional, upon which he leant his head in the attitude of a person penetrated with grief. He remained sometime in this posture. I knew not what to think ; my knees shook under me ; I was overwhelmed with an agitation  
and

and disorder which it is impossible to describe. I was in the situation of a traveller, who, covered with the shades of night, wanders among precipices which he does not see, and who every moment is alarmed by the sound of voices, crying, You are undone! . . . . Surveying me then with an air more tranquil, yet blended with anxiety and affection, he said, Do you enjoy good health? — Yes, my father. — Would you be very much injured by the want of a night's sleep? — No, my father. — Very well, you shall not go to bed this night. Accordingly, after you have taken your refreshment, you will repair to church, prostrate yourself at the feet of the altar, and pass the night in prayer; you know not the danger to which you have been exposed; you will return thanks to God for having preserved you safe; and to-morrow you will ap-

proach the Holy Table with all the other nuns. The only penance I prescribe for you, is to keep yourself at a distance from your Superior, and to repel her poisoned caresses. Go. I will also join my prayers with yours. What terrible uneasiness must your situation occasion me! I am aware of all the consequences which the advice I give you will produce, but it is a duty which I owe to you, and to myself. God is master, and we have but one law.

I recollect but very imperfectly, Sir, all that he said. At present, when I compare his conversation, as I have detailed it to you, with the terrible impression which it produced upon my mind, I discover no resemblance, but this must be because my account is mutilated and unconnected; because many points are omitted which have escaped my memory; because I annexed

nexed to them no distinct idea ; and : because I could discover, and still can perceive, no importance in circumstances upon which he declaimed with the greatest violence. For instance, what is there so extraordinary in the harpsichord scene ? Are there not many persons upon whom music produces the most violent effects ? I myself have been told, that certain airs, certain modulations, entirely changed my physiognomy : at these moments I was transported quite beyond myself ; I knew not what I did ; yet for all this I do not believe I was the less innocent. Why might not the case have been the same with my Superior, who, in spite of all her follies, and all her inequalities, was certainly a woman of the most exquisite sensibility ? She could not hear a story at all affecting without melting into tears ; when I recounted

to her the events of my life, she was touched to a degree that would have inspired compassion. Why was not the commiseration which she testified, also urged against her as a crime ? and the night scene, the event of which he waited to hear with such deadly apprehension ? . . . . Certainly this man is too rigid.

I, nevertheless, punctually performed what he had prescribed ; the immediate consequences of which he had undoubtedly foreseen. As soon as I left the confessional I went and prostrated myself at the feet of the altar ; my head was distracted with terror ; and there I remained till supper. The Superior, uneasy about me, had sent to call me, and she was answered that I was engaged in prayer. Several times she appeared at the door of the choir, but I affected not to perceive her. When  
5 the



the hour of supper arrived, I repaired to the refectory ; I hastily finished supper, and immediately returned to the church. I did not attend the evening's recreation, and at the time of retiring to bed, I did not return to my apartment. The Superior was not ignorant how I was engaged. The night was far advanced ; silence reigned throughout the house, when she came down to me. The image under which the Director had painted her, recurred to my imagination, terror shook my limbs, I durst not look at her. I believed I was to see her with a hideous countenance, and all wrapped in flames. I said to myself, *Satana, vade retrò, apage Satana* ; My God, preserve me from this fiend.

She fell upon her knees, and after praying for some time, she said, Saint Susan, what are you doing here ?—

Madam,

Madam, you see.—Do you know what o'clock it is?—Yes, Madam.---Why did you not retire to your apartment at the appointed time?---Because I am preparing to celebrate to-morrow, the great day.---Your design then was to pass the night here.---Yes, Madam.—And who gave you permission?—It was the Director's command.—The Director has no authority to impose any command contrary to the rules of the house; and I command you to go to bed.—Madam, it is the penance he has prescribed.—You must substitute in its place some other performances.—That does not depend upon my choice.—Come, my child, come. The damps of the church during the night will affect your health; you will pray in your cell. . . . She then attempted to lay hold of my hand, but I shrunk back swiftly. You fly me! said she.—Yes, Madam,  
I fly

I fly you. . . . My courage being in some measure restored by the sanctity of the place, by the presence of the divinity, by the innocence of my heart, I ventured to raise my eyes and look at her; but no sooner had I perceived her, than I uttered a loud shriek, and ran round the choir like a person distracted, crying, Be gone from me, Satan! . . . She did not follow; she remained in her place; and stretching out her arms to me, she said, in a voice the most tender and the most affecting, What is the matter with you? Whence arises this affright? Stop, I am not Satan, I am your Superior and your friend. . . . I stopped, and turned my head towards her, and perceived that I had been terrified by a whimsical appearance which my imagination had realized. She was placed in such a position with regard to the lamp, which

hung from the roof of the church, that the light only shone upon her face and the extremity of her hands, while the rest remained in the shade, which displayed her in a very singular aspect. Having a little regained my courage, I threw myself into a pew. She approached, and was about to seat herself in the neighbouring one, when I rose and placed myself in the pew below. I travelled in this manner from pew to pew, till I reached the very last; I then stopped and conjured her to leave at least one vacant space between us. With all my heart, said she. We then both sat down, a single pew separating us. The Superior then, beginning the conversation, said, May we know, Saint Susan, whence arises this terror which my presence inspires?---Dear mother, it is not I, it is Father Lemoine. He represented the tenderness you entertain

tain for me, and the endearments you bestow, and in which I confess I comprehend nothing improper, under the most hideous colours. He commanded me to shun you, never to enter your apartment alone, to leave my cell should you come there. In short, he has painted you to my mind as the infernal demon. I cannot tell you all he said to me on that subject.—You have then spoken to him?—No, dear mother, but I could not avoid answering him.—So, I am then very frightful in your eyes?—No, dear mother, it is impossible for me not to love you, not to feel all the value of your kindness, not to intreat you still to continue it; but I will obey my director.—You will come to see me no more?—I will not, dear mother.—You will no more admit me to your cell?—I will not, dear mother.—You will reject my caresses?—

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It will cost me a struggle to submit to that injunction, for my natural temper is prone to endearments, and I love to be caressed, but it must be. I promised to my director that I would reject your endearments, and I confirmed it by an oath at the feet of the altar. Could I but describe to you the manner in which he explained himself! He is a man of piety, a man of learning; and what interest could he have in pointing out to me dangers where they do not exist, in estranging the heart of a nun from the heart of her Superior? But, perhaps, in actions extremely innocent both upon your part and mine, he discovers a germ of secret corruption, which he imagines already developed in you, and which he fears lest you should develope in me. I will confess to you, that when I recollect the impressions which I have sometimes experienced, . . .



rienced.... Upon my leaving you and returning to my cell, why, my dear mother, was I agitated and thoughtful? Why could I neither pray nor work? Whence arose that kind of listlessness which I had never before felt? Why did I, who never sleep in the day-time, feel myself overpowered with slumbers? I conceive that in you it was a contagious distemper, the effects of which began to be displayed in me; but Father Lemoine considers it in a very different light.—And in what light does he consider the subject?—He considers it as attended with all the foulness and all the horrors of guilt; your destruction already consummated, mine likewise contrived. I know not all the extent of the criminality which he discovers.—Poh, said she, this Father Lemoine is nothing but a visionary; this is not the first prank of a similar nature which  
he

he has played me. That I attach myself to any one with a tender friendship is enough to set him a going in order to turn her head. He had very nearly reduced that poor girl, Saint Theresa, to a state of madness. I begin to get tired of this nonsense, and I must rid myself of this troublesome man. Besides, he lives ten leagues off, and it is no small trouble to prevail upon him to come, nor can he be had when we wish his attendance.\* But we will speak of this more at our ease. Won't you go up stairs?—No, dear mother, I request it of you as a favour, to allow me to pass the night here. Were I to fail in the performance of this duty, I should be afraid to partake of the sacraments with the rest of the community. But you, dear mother, do you intend to join the communion?—Doubtless.—Father Lemoine then has said nothing to you? —No.

—No.—But how did that happen?—  
Because I gave him no opportunity of speaking to me. We only go to confession to accuse ourselves of the sins we have committed, and I do not consider in that light, the tender affection I bear to a girl so amiable as Saint Susan. If this is attended with any fault, it consists in my centering in her alone, a sentiment which ought to be diffused over all the members of the community ; but it is not in my power to give the direction to my attachments. I cannot prevent myself from treating merit with distinction where it exists, and from clinging to it with the ardour of preference. I ask pardon of God for it ; and I cannot conceive how your Father Lemoine can discover that my damnation is sealed in a partiality so natural, and against which it is so difficult to guard. I endeavour to contri-

bute to the happiness of all ; but there are some whom I esteem and whom I love more than others, because they are more amiable and more estimable. Such then is the whole of the crime I have committed with you : Saint Susan, do you consider it as very enormous ?—No, dear mother.—Come, dear child, let each of us say a short prayer, and then retire.—I entreated her anew to permit me to pass the night in the church : she consented, upon condition that it was never to be repeated, and then withdrew.

I reflected upon what she had said to me. I supplicated the Almighty to illuminate my understanding ; I weighed every circumstance ; and concluded, that upon the whole, although persons were of the same sex, the manner in which they testified their mutual friendship, might at least be indecent ; that Father Lemoine,

Lemoine, a person of austere character, had perhaps exaggerated matters, but that the advice to shun the extreme familiarity of my Superior, by maintaining a great deal of reserve, was very proper to be followed; and I accordingly laid down a resolution to that effect.

In the morning, when the nuns came to the choir, they joined me in my place. They all sat down at the holy Table, with the Superior at their head. This circumstance served completely to convince me of her innocence, without, however, inducing me to swerve from the conduct I had resolved to pursue. Besides, I was very far from feeling towards her all that force of attraction which she experienced in my favour. I could not forbear comparing her with my first Superior. What a difference! She had neither the same piety, nor the

gravity, nor the same dignity, nor the same fervour, nor the same judgement, nor the same taste for order.

In the short space of a few days there occurred two very important events; the one was, gaining my process against the nuns of Longchamp, who were condemned to pay to the house of Saint Eutrope, where I now was, a pension proportionate to my dowry; the other was, a change of the Director. It was the Superior herself who informed me of the last occurrence.

I no longer went to her cell unaccompanied, nor did she visit mine alone. She was always in quest of me, but I took care to shun her; she perceived the distance I observed to her, and reproached me with it. I know not what passed in her heart, but it must have been something extraordinary. She rose in the night, and walked



walked in the corridors, particularly in mine; I heard her often pass and re-pass, stop at my door, complain and sigh; I was afraid, and I would cover myself over with my bed-clothes. In the day time, if I happened to be on the promenade, in the hall for working, or in the room for recreation, she spent whole hours gazing on me, in such a way as I could not observe her; she watched every step I took; if I went down stairs, I met her at the bottom of the stair-case; and when I went up again, she was waiting at the top. One day she stopped me; she looked at me without saying a word; the tears rushed from her eyes; then, all of a sudden, throwing herself upon the ground, and grasping my knee with her hands, she said to me: 'Cruel sister, ask my life, and I will give it you; but do not shun me, I cannot live without you.... Her

situation excited my compassion ; her eyes were sunk, her countenance was become pale and meagre. I recollected she was my Superior ; she lay at my feet, with her head leaning against my knee, which she held in her embrace ; I stretched out my hands, she seized them with ardour ; she kissed them, and then looked at me ; kissed them a second time, and looked at me again ; I raised her up. She trembled, and could scarcely walk ; I conducted her back to her cell. When her door was opened, she took me by the hand, and gently pulled me, to make me go in, but without either speaking or looking at me. No, said I, my dear mother, no ; I am under promise to myself, and it will be better for us both that I keep it ; I occupy too a large place in your heart, it is so much lost to God, to whom you owe it all.—And does it become you  
to

to reproach me with it?...—I endeavoured, while I was speaking to her, to disengage my hand from hers.—You will not come in then? said she.—No, my dear mother, no.—You will not, Saint Susan? but you do not know what will be the consequence to me; no, you do not know it; I shall die.....—These last words inspired me with a sentiment quite opposite to that which she supposed; I wrested my hand from her, and ran off. She turned about, and followed me with her eyes for a little way, then returned into her cell, and, without shutting the door, uttered the most doleful lamentations. I heard them; they penetrated my soul; I was in doubt, for a moment, whether I should remain apart, or whether I should return; some repulsive emotions, however, determined me to remain, but not without feeling severely the

state in which I left her; for I am naturally compassionate. I shut myself up in my cell; I found myself uneasy; I was at a loss how to employ myself; I took some turns in the apartment, distracted and vexed; I went out and returned; at last I went and knocked at my neighbour Saint Theresa's door. She was in close conversation with another young nun; I said to her: Dear sister, I am sorry to interrupt you, but I pray you to excuse me for one moment, I have a single word to say to you.... She followed me to my cell, and I told her that our mother Superior was in great distress; that I did not know what was the cause of it; but that if she would go and see her, perhaps she might console her..... She made no reply, but leaving her friend in her cell, shut her door, and ran to visit the Superior.

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This woman's malady grew worse and worse every day; she became melancholy and serious; the gaiety which had incessantly prevailed from the time of my coming to the house, all of a sudden disappeared; every thing assumed an aspect of austerity; service was performed with becoming dignity; strangers were almost entirely excluded from the parlour; the nuns were prohibited from visiting one another; religious exercises were resumed with the most scrupulous exactness; there were no more meetings at the Superiors, no more afternoon parties; the most trifling faults were punished with the utmost rigour; they still sometimes applied to me to procure a pardon, but I absolutely refused to ask it. The cause of this revolution was a secret to no one. The old nuns were little disturbed by it, but it grieved the young ones,

ones, and made them regard me with an evil eye: as for myself, satisfied with my conduct, I was equally indifferent to their ill-humour and their reproaches.

This Superior, whom I could neither relieve nor refrain from pitying, passed successively from melancholy to piety, and from piety to madness. To follow her through all the different stages of her course would involve me in an endless detail; I shall only mention, that in her first state, she sometimes sought for me, and sometimes shunned me; at one time she would treat us with her accustomed tenderness, at another time she would exercise the utmost severity; she would call and then dismiss us; grant recreation, and in a moment after revoke the order; summon us to attend the choir, and, when we were preparing to obey, by a second toll of the bell,  
shut



shut the whole society up in their cells. It is difficult to conceive the restless life she led ; the day was passed in going to her cell, and returning ; in taking up her breviary and laying it down ; in going up and down stairs ; in dropping, and in lifting up her veil. The night was subject to almost as many interruptions as the day.

Some of the nuns applied to me, and gave me to understand, that by shewing a little more complaisance and respect to the Superior, every thing would be restored to the wonted order, or rather the wonted disorder ; I answered them, sorrowfully : I pity you, but tell me plainly what it is that I must do ?..... Some of them turned away, hanging down their heads, without making any reply ; others gave me advice which it was impossible to reconcile with those of my Director ; I  
mean

mean of him they had recalled, for we had not yet seen his successor.

The Superior went out no more at night; she passed whole weeks without going either to service, to the choir, to the dining-room, or to the hall of recreation; she lived shut up in her chamber; she wandered in the corridors, or went down to the church; she went about knocking at the doors of the nuns, and saying to them in a plaintive voice: Sister such a one, pray for me; Sister such another, pray for me..... A report spread, that she was disposed to make a general confession.

One day, when I went down first to the church, I saw a piece of paper fixed to the curtain of the rail; I went and read it: "Dear sisters, you are invited  
" to pray for a nun who has strayed  
" from the path of duty, and who  
" wishes to return to God..." I was  
tempted

tempted to tear it, but I let it remain. Some days after, there was another, with the following inscription: “Dear  
“ sisters, you are desired to implore  
“ the mercy of God upon a nun, who  
“ is sensible of her wanderings; they  
“ are many....” Another day, there was another invitation: “Dear sisters,  
“ you are entreated to pray God to  
“ deliver a nun from despair, who has  
“ lost all confidence in the divine  
“ mercy.....”

These invitations, in which were painted the cruel vicissitudes of a mind in pain, threw me into a profound melancholy. While I was looking on some occasion at one of these placards, I asked myself, what are these wanderings with which she reproaches herself? whence proceed the pangs of this woman? what crimes can she have committed? I recollected the exclamations

mations of the Director ; I recalled his expressions ; I endeavoured to find out their meaning ; I could not understand them ; I became, as it were, absorbed. Some of the nuns, who observed me, began to talk with one another about me ; and, if I am not mistaken, they considered me as threatened with the same terrors by which the Superior was afflicted.

This poor Superior never looked from under her veil ; she took no part in the affairs of the house ; she never spoke to any body, excepting the new Director, with whom she had frequent interviews : he was a young Benedictine. I know not whether he enjoined all the mortifications which she practised ; she fasted three days in the week ; she macerated herself ; she heard service in the inferior stalls ; we passed her door in going to church ; there we would  
find

find her prostrated, with her face upon the ground; she refused to rise in any person's presence. At night, she went down stairs barefooted and in her shift; if Saint Theresa or I happened to meet her, she returned, and put her face against the wall. One day, on going out of my cell, I found her prostrate, with her arms stretched out, and her face reclining upon the ground; she said to me, Advance, walk over me, tread upon me, I deserve no better treatment.

In the course of the three months that she laboured under this malady, the rest of the community had conceived a strong aversion to me. I shall not again enter into a detail of all the disagreeable circumstances which a nun, hated in her convent, is subjected to; you are already acquainted with them. I perceived my disgust at my situation  
4 returning.

returning. I communicated this disgust, and all my troubles to the new Director ; his name was Don Morel ; he was a man near forty, of a warm temper. He seemed to listen to me with attention and with interest ; he desired to know the occurrences of my life ; he made me enter into a most minute detail of my family, my inclinations, my character, the houses in which I had lived, that in which I now was, and what had passed between me and the Superior. I told him all, without any concealment. He seemed to attach less importance to the conduct of the Superior than Father Lemoine did ; he said only a few words upon it, and that with apparent reluctance ; he considered the matter as over ; what affected him most were my secret dispositions with respect to the religious life. In proportion as I opened myself to him, he returned my confidence



confidence by making similar disclosures on his part ; if I made confession to him, he reposed trust in me ; what he told me of his trouble had a perfect conformity to what I had experienced ; he had entered into the religious state from compulsion ; he supported his condition with the same disgust, and had the same complaints against it as myself. But, my dear Sister, added he, what can be done ? there is only one resource, namely, to render our lot as little distressing as we can. And then he gave me the same counsels that he followed ; they were prudent ; but he proceeded to remark that we cannot avoid chagrin, and all we can do is to bear up under it. Religious persons are happy in proportion as they can make a merit before God of their sufferings : when they can do this, they are matter of joy to them ; they court mortifications

above all things ; the more bitter and frequent they are, the happier they find themselves ; they exchange present, for future felicity, and secure the latter by a voluntary sacrifice of the former. After suffering much, they say to God, *Amplius, Domine* ; More still, good Lord.... a prayer which God takes care to answer. But though we suffer the same pains with them, we cannot promise ourselves the same recompence, because we want the only thing which confers any value upon them, resignation ; it is a melancholy fact. Alas ! how shall I inspire you with that virtue in which you are deficient, and which I do not possess ? Without this we are exposed to destruction in the world to come, after being miserable in the present. After living in penance, we shall as surely be damned, as those who pass through this life in

the midst of pleasures ; we subject ourselves to mortification ; they indulge in enjoyment, and in the end the same punishment awaits both. How miserable the condition of a monk or nun, who has had no call to the religious life ! it is ours however, and we cannot change it. They have loaded us with galling chains, which we are doomed to support, without hope of breaking ; let us try, my dear Sister, to drag them. Go, I shall return, and see you again.

He returned in a few days after ; I saw him in the parlour. The history of our lives, which we mutually disclosed, presented an infinite number of circumstances which formed between us so many points of contact, and of remonstrance : he had been subjected to almost the same domestic and religious persecutions that I had undergone. I did not imagine that the picture

of his disgust was at all calculated to dissipate mine ; it produced this effect however in me, and I believe the communication of my disgust produced the same effect in him. Thus, from a resemblance of character, united with a correspondence in events, the more we reviewed ourselves, the more we were pleased with each other ; the history of his moments was the history of mine ; the history of his sentiments was the history of mine ; the history of his heart was the history of mine.

After we were tired with speaking about ourselves, we conversed about others, particularly the Superior. The situation he held as Director rendered him extremely reserved : I discovered, however, from the tenor of his conversation, that the present temper of this woman could not last long, that she was vainly struggling with herself. Oh, that one of

two things would be the consequence ! either that she would revert to her former habits, or that she would lose her judgement. I had the strongest curiosity to know more ; he could easily have resolved those questions which I had never been able to answer myself, but I did not make free to interrogate him ; I ventured only to ask if he knew Father Lemoine ?—Yes, said he, he is a very deserving man, very much so indeed.—We no longer see him as we used to do.—No ? Can you tell me the reason ?—I should be sorry if it transpired.—You may rely upon my discretion.—They have written against him, I believe, to the Archbishop.—And what could they say against him ?—That he lived at too great a distance from the house ; that they could not get him when he wanted ; that his morality was too severe ; that they had some reason

to suspect him of entertaining innovating sentiments ; and that he disseminated a factious spirit in the house, and estranged the minds of the nuns from their Superior.—And how do you come to know this ?—I have it from himself.—You have seen him then ?—Yes, I have seen him ; he has spoken to me sometimes about you.—What did he say ?—That you was much to be pitied ; that he could not conceive how you have been able to support all the hardships you have undergone ; that though he had only an opportunity of conversing with you once or twice, he did not believe that ever you would accommodate yourself to the religious life ; that he had a mind.....Here he stopped short ; and I added, What had he a mind to do ?—Don Morel replied, It is an affair of private confidence, which I am not at liberty to disclose....

I did



I did not insist ; I said only, it is very true that it was Father Lemoine who made me estrange myself from my Superior.—He was right in so doing.—Why ?—Sister, replied she, with a serious air, follow his counsels, and remain ignorant, as long as you live, of the reason which dictated them.—But it appears to me that, if I knew the danger, I should be more attentive in shunning it.—Perhaps the contrary might be the case.—You must have a very bad opinion of me.—I have that opinion of your morals and of your innocence, which they naturally inspire ; but believe me, there is a fatal insight which you cannot acquire without being corrupted by it. It is your innocence which has wrought upon your Superior ; had you been better informed, she would have respected you less.—I don't understand you.—So much the better.

K 4

—But

—But how can the familiarities and the caresses of a woman be dangerous to one of her own sex?—No reply on the part of Don Morel.—Am I not the same as when I came here?—Still no reply on the part of Don Morel.—Should I not have continued the same? Where then is the harm of loving her, of telling her so, and of giving her expressions of it? It is so pleasant!—Very true, said Don Morel, raising his eyes, which were fixed upon the ground, while I spoke, and casting a look upon me.—And is this a malady frequent in convents? My poor Superior! into what a condition has she fallen!—It is truly afflicting, and I am afraid she will grow worse and worse. She was not made for her situation, and this is always the consequence of it sooner or later;—when we oppose the general bent of nature, the constraint gives birth

birth to ungovernable passions, which are the more violent, because they are ill-founded ; it is a sort of madness.--- Madness ?---Yes, and it will increase. —And do you think that this fate awaits all those who are bound to a state to which they were not called ?—Not all ; there are some who die beforehand ; there are others whose temper is so flexible, as in time to yield ; and there are others who are supported for a considerable time, by vague uncertain hopes.—In what hopes can a nun indulge ?—What hopes ? at first they have that of reviling their vows.—And when that fails ?—They hope that they will some day find the gates open ; that mankind will renounce the extravagance of intombing living victims in the flower of youth, and that convents will be abolished ; that the house will be burnt ; that the walls of the cloister will fall ; that  
some

some one will come to their aid. All these suppositions pass in their brain, and they indulge them ; while they are walking in the garden, they look, without thinking of it, if the walls are very high ; if they are in their cells, they try if they could force the bar of the railing ; if there is a street under the windows, they fix their eyes upon it ; if they hear any person pass, their heart palpitates ; they sigh after a deliverer ; if there is any tumult, the noise of which is heard in the house, they are eager with expectation ; they reckon upon some distemper, which will render it necessary to call in a physician, or which will cause them to be sent to a watering place.—True, very true, exclaimed I, you read the bottom of my heart ; I have indulged, and I still indulge in these illusions.—And when they vanish upon reflection (for these  
salutary

salutary vapours which are the offsprings of the heart, and which cloud the understanding, are at intervals dispelled) then they experience all the weight of misery ; they detest themselves, they abhor those about them, they utter cries and groans, and lamentations ; they feel the approaches of despair. Then some run and throw themselves at the feet of their Superior, seeking consolation from her ; others prostrate themselves in their cells, or before the altar, and invoke the aid of Heaven ; others rend their clothes, and tear their hair ; others go in quest of a deep well, a high window, or a noose, and sometimes they find the one or the other ; others, after enduring torments for a long time, fall into a kind of stupidity and turn silly ; others, who have more feeble and delicate organs, waste away with languor ; and there are others, whose whole system

tem

tem is deranged, their imagination troubled, and who become furious. The happiest are those who experience a renewal of those salutary illusions, and who are flattered and consoled by them, till their latter end ; their life is a series of alternate error and despair.—The most unhappy, apparently, added I, with a deep sigh, are those who pass through all these states in succession..... Ah ! my father, how vexed I am at what you have told me !—Why ?—I was unacquainted with what passed in my own mind ; it is now laid open to me ; and the illusions with which I pleased myself, will now vanish more quickly than before.

I was preparing to continue, when another nun entered, a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and I know not how many. The conversation became general. Some looked at the  
Director,



Director, others listened to him in silence and with downcast eyes. Several of them together proposed questions to him, and all loudly extolled the wisdom of his answers. Meanwhile I had retired into a corner, where I resigned myself to a profound reverie. In the midst of these conversations, in which all endeavoured to display themselves to the best advantage, and to fix the preference of the holy man by every accomplishment they possessed, some one was heard slowly to approach, at intervals to stop and breathe profound sighs. They listened, they whispered to each other, It is she, it is our Superior : they were then silent, and sat down in a circle. It was she in reality. She entered. Her veil reached down to her middle, her arms were crossed upon her breast, and her head reclining. I was the first whom she perceived.

5

ceived. At this moment she withdrew from under her veil, one of her hands with which she covered her eyes, and turning herself a little to one side with the other, she made a signal for us all to depart. We withdrew in silence, and she remained alone with Don Morel.

I am aware, Sir, that you are about to conceive a bad opinion of me, but I am not ashamed of what I have done, Why should I blush to confess it? Besides, how could I suppress, in this recital, an event which gave rise to several consequences? Say then that my mind is of a very regular cast: when the circumstances I relate are calculated to excite your esteem, or increase your commiseration, I may write well or ill; but I write with incredible ease and rapidity, my heart is gay, expressions come to me without effort, my tears  
flow

flow sweetly ; I conceive that you are present, that I see you, and that you listen to me. If on the contrary I am obliged to show myself to you in an unfavourable aspect, I think with difficulty, I want expressions, my pen moves ill, the character of my writing is affected by my situation, and I only continue because I secretly flatter myself that you will not read those passages. Of this description is the following.

After all our sisters had retired. . . —  
Well then ! what did you do ? — You don't guess ? No, you are too honest for that. I went down upon tip-toe, and softly took my station at the parlour door, to overhear what was said. That is very bad, you will say. . . . Oh ! as for that, agreed, it is very bad, so I said to myself ; and my agitation, the precaution I took to avoid observation, the

the hesitation with which I proceeded, the voice of my conscience which every moment urged me to return, would not allow a doubt of it to remain. Curiosity however proved victorious, and I went on. But if it was bad to have privily overheard the conversation of two persons, who believed themselves alone, is it not still worse to report it to you? Here again is one of those passages which I write, because I flatter myself you will not read it. I know that this is not the case, but I must nevertheless endeavour to persuade myself of its truth.

The first word I heard, after a considerable pause, made me shudder: it was, My father, I am damned. . . I again collected my spirits. I continued to listen; the veil which hitherto had concealed from me the danger I had undergone, was torn off. At this moment I  
heard

heard myself called. I was obliged to go ; I retired ; yet, alas ! I had already heard but too much. What a woman, Marquis ! what an abominable woman !

Here the memoirs of Sister Susan are interrupted. What follows, are only memorandums of what she probably meant to employ in the remainder of her narration. It appears that her Superior became mad ; and to her unfortunate situation, the fragments which follow must be understood to refer.

After this confession we enjoyed several days of serenity. Joy was restored to the community, and I received compliments upon the event, which I rejected with indignation.

She no longer shunned me ; she looked at me ; nor did my presence appear to cause her any trouble. I did every thing in my power to conceal the horror with which she inspired me, since, by a

curiosity, I had obtained a better knowledge of her character.

By and by she became silent, and reserved ; she said nothing but, Yes, and No. She took solitary walks ; she refused nourishment ; her blood became inflamed ; she was seized with a fever, to which a delirium succeeded.

Alone in her bed she saw me ; she spoke to me ; she invited me to approach ; she addressed me in terms the most tender. If she heard any one walk past her chamber, she exclaimed, It is she passing, it is her step, I recollect it well ; call her in. . . . No, no, let her alone.

It is singular enough that she was never once mistaken, nor did she ever take another for me.

She would break out into loud fits of laughing, and next moment burst into tears. Our sisters surrounded her in  
silence,



silence, and some of them wept along with her.

Suddenly she would exclaim, I have not been at church, I have not said my prayers. . . . I wish to rise out of bed ; I wish to be dressed ; let me be dressed. . . . . If her request was refused, she added, Give me at least my breviary. . . . They gave it her, she opened it, turned over the leaves with her finger, and she continued to turn over even after she had got to the end of the book. All the while her eyes were distracted.

One night she went down to the church alone. Some of the Sisters followed her. She prostrated herself on the steps of the altar ; she groaned, sighed, and prayed aloud, went out, returned, and said, Go bring her, she is a soul so pure ! she is a creature so innocent ! If she but joined her prayers to mine. . . . Then addressing herself

to the whole community, and turning to the empty benches, she cried, Go, go, all of you, let her remain alone with me. You are not worthy to approach her ; were your voices to mingle with hers, your profane incense would corrupt before God, the purity of hers. Begone, begone..... Then she exhorted me to ask of God assistance and pardon. She thought she saw God. The heavens appeared to her to be divided by gleams of lightening, to open asunder and thunder over her head. Angels in fury descended. She trembled at the looks of the divinity. She flew round the church, precipitated herself into the obscure corners ; she implored mercy ; she fixed her face upon the ground ; in this position she fell asleep ; the cold damps of the place affected her ; she was carried back to her cell as dead.

In the morning she knew nothing of the dreadful scene that had taken place the preceding night. She would say, Where are our sisters? I no longer see any body; I am left alone in this house; they have all abandoned me, and Saint Theresa too: they have done well. Since Saint Susan is gone, I may venture out, I shall be in no danger of meeting her.... Ah! were I to meet her! but she is gone, is she not? Is it not so, is she not gone?.... Happy is the house in which she resides! She will tell all to her new Superior: what will they think of me?.... Is Saint Theresa dead? I heard the death knell all night long.... Poor girl! she is ruined for ever: it is I, it is I who have done it.... One day I shall be confronted with her. What shall I say to her? what shall I answer her?.... Oh! unhappy girl! Oh! woe is me!

At other times she would say, Are our Sisters returned? Tell them that I am very ill. . . . Raise up my pillow. . . . Unlace me. . . . I feel something here which weighs me down. . . . My head is on fire. . . . Take off my cap. . . . I wish to wash my hands. . . . Bring me water, pour, pour on still. They are white, but the foul spots of the soul cannot be wiped away. . . . I wish I were dead. I wish I had never been born, I then had never seen her.

One morning she was discovered with her feet bare, in her shirt, her hair dishevelled, howling, foaming, and running round her cell, her hands upon her ears, her eyes shut, and her body squeezed against the wall. . . . Away from that abyss! hear you those cries? These are the infernal regions; I see the flames issuing from that profound abyss; from the middle of these raging fires

fires I hear a confused sound of voices calling on me. . . . My God, have pity upon me ! . . . . Go, quick, ring the bell, assemble they community ; tell them to pray for me, I will pray also. . . . But it is hardly day yet, our sisters are asleep. . . . All night long I have never closed an eye ; I wish to sleep too, but cannot.

One of the Sisters said to her, Madam, some sorrow labours in your breast, entrust it to me, it will perhaps relieve you.—Sister Agatha, attend, come near me. . . . nearer. . . . nearer still. . . . Nobody must overhear us. I will disclose to you all, but keep my secret. . . . You have seen her ?—Whom, Madam ? —It is not true that nobody has a sweetness like her ? How elegantly she walks ! what grace ! what nobleness ! what modesty ! . . . . Go to her, tell her. . . . Alas ! no, don't go, say nothing to her. . . . You cannot approach her, the

angels of heaven guard her, they watch round her ; I have seen them, you will see them, and they will terrify you like me. Stop. . . . If you go, what can you say to her ? Devise something at which she will not blush. . . . But, Madam, were you to consult our Director. Yes, but, yes. . . . No, no, I know what he will tell me, I have already heard it all. . . . Of what am I to converse with him ? . . . O ! could I lose all memory ! . . . Could I sink into annihilation and be born again ! . . . Do not call the Director ; I would rather you read to me the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Read. . . . I begin to respire. . . . One drop of blood will suffice to purify me. . . . See, it springs bubbling from his side. . . . Apply that sacred wound to my head. . . . His blood streams over me, but does not remain. . . . I am undone ! . . . Take  
away



away that crucifix. . . . Bring it back.... It was brought back to her; she pressed it between her hands, she kissed it all over, and added, These are her eyes, that is her mouth; when am I to see her again ?. . . Sister Agatha, tell her that I love her; paint to her faithfully my situation, tell her that I am dying.

She was bled, she was bathed; but remedies seemed only to increase her distemper. I durst not attempt to describe to you all the indecent actions she committed, all the obscene observations which escaped her during her delirium. Every moment she raised her hand to her brow to drive away tormenting ideas, images, I know not what images! She plunged her head into the bed, and covered her face with the sheets. It is the tempter! would she exclaim: What fantastic form has  
he

he assumed ! Take some holy water ; throw some holy water over me... Stop, stop, he is now gone.

It was very soon found necessary to confine her ; but her prison was not so well guarded as to prevent her one day making her escape. She had torn her clothes to pieces ; all naked, she flew through the passages, except that two pieces of the broken cords, with which she had been bound, hung from her arms ; she cried, I am your Superior ; you have all taken the oath of obedience to me, and I shall be obeyed. Wretches ! you have thrown me into prison ; this then is the reward of my kindness ! you abuse me because I am too good ; I shall be so no more.... Fire !... murder !... thieves !... help !... Assist me, St. Theresa ; assist me, St. Susan.... Meanwhile, she was seized and taken back  
to

to prison. She then said, You are right, you are right ; alas ! I have lost my reason, I feel that I have.

Sometimes she seemed haunted with the images of different punishments ; she thought she saw women with cords round their neck, and their hands tied behind their backs, some with torches in their hands. She imagined herself in company with those who were doing penance ; she thought herself on the way to the place of execution, and addressed the executioner : I have deserved my fate, but try and put me quickly out of pain.... I now tell you nothing, Sir, but what is exactly true ; and every circumstance does not occur to my recollection, or I should blush to pollute my pages with the recital.

After living several months in this deplorable situation, she died. What a frightful death, Marquis ! I saw her,

I saw her, the terrible picture of despair and guilt in her last moments. She thought herself surrounded by infernal spirits, that waited to catch her soul. She exclaimed, in a voice almost suffocated: There they are! see there!.... And opposing to them on the right and left, a crucifix which she held in her hand, she howled, she cried, My God!... My God!.... Sister Theresa very soon followed her; and we received another Superior advanced in years, full of ill-nature and superstition.

I was accused of having practised sorcery upon her predecessor; she believed the charge, and my vexations were renewed. The new Director was equally tormented by his Superiors, and persuaded me to elope from the house.

The plan of my flight was arranged. I repaired to the garden between eleven  
and

and twelve at night. Ropes were thrown over the wall, which I fixed round me; they broke, and I fell to the ground. The skin of my legs was torn, and I received a violent contusion on the back. After a second and a third attempt, I reached the top of the wall. I descended; but how great was my surprise, when, instead of a post-chaise, in which I hoped to be received, I found a wretched public coach! I was now upon the road to Paris, with a young Benedictine. I very soon perceived, by the indecent tone which he assumed, and the liberties which he indulged, that none of the conditions which had been stipulated with me, would be observed. At this moment I regretted my cell, and felt all the horror of my situation.

Here I will paint the scene which took place in the coach. What a dreadful

ful scene! what a profligate man! I cried out; the coachman came to my assistance; a violent brawl ensued between the coachman and the monk.

I arrived at Paris. The carriage stopped in a little street, at a little narrow door, which opened into an obscure dirty alley. The mistress of the apartments came to meet me, and installed me in the highest story, in a little room, which contained hardly even necessary articles of furniture. I received a visit from the woman who occupied the first floor. You are young, Mademoiselle, you must needs grow melancholy for want of society. Come down stairs to my apartments, where you will find an agreeable company, both of gentlemen and ladies; all of them not indeed so handsome, but almost as young as yourself. We talk,  
we



we play, we sing, we dance, we combine all kinds of amusements. Though you make all the gentlemen in love with you, I can assure you, that our ladies will neither be jealous nor offended. Come, Mademoiselle.... This woman was somewhat advanced in life, her voice was sweet, and her conversation extremely insinuating.

I passed a fortnight in this house, exposed to all the importunity of my perfidious ravisher, and to all the tumultuous scenes of a suspicious place, watching every moment an opportunity to escape.

One day, I at last found the means of putting my resolution in practice. Night was far advanced. Had I been in the neighbourhood of my convent, I should have returned to it. I ran, without knowing where I went. I was  
stopped

stopped by some men ; terror seized me. Overpowered by fatigue, I sunk down in a swoon upon the threshold of a Tallow-chandler's shop. They administered assistance to me ; and when I recovered my senses, I found myself stretched upon a bed, surrounded by a number of people. They asked me who I was, and I know not what answer I returned. They gave me the servant girl of the house to conduct me ; I took her arm, and we walked on. We had already gone a considerable way, when the girl observed to me, Mademoiselle, you know surely where we are going ? —No, my child ; to the hospital, I believe.—To the hospital ! have you no house to go to ?—Alas ! no.—What have you done to be turned out of doors at this time of night ? but we are now at the gate of the hospital of St. Catherine ;

Catherine; let us try if we can procure admittance. At all events, be under no apprehension, you shall not remain in the streets, you shall share my bed.

I returned to the Tallow-chandler's. How great was the terror of the servant-girl when she saw the skin stripped off my legs, by the fall I received in making my escape from the convent! I passed the night in that house. The following evening I returned to the hospital of St. Catherine. There I remained three days; at the end of which, I received intimation, that I must either apply to the hospital general, or take the first situation that should offer.

What dangers did I encounter in the hospital of St. Catherine, both from men and women! for it is here, as I have since been informed, that the rakes

and women of the town go to provide themselves. The apprehension of misery gave no strength to the coarse attempts of seduction, to which I was exposed. I sold my clothes, and supplied myself with others more suitable to my situation.

I entered into the service of a laundress, with whom I at present reside. I receive linen which I iron. My day's work is severe. I am ill fed, ill lodged, and sleep on a wretched bed; but to make amends, I am treated with humanity. The husband is coachman in a family. The wife is a little hasty, but, in other respects, a good woman. I should be sufficiently content with my situation, could I hope to enjoy it unmolested.

I have been informed that the police laid hold of my ravisher, and sent him back to his Superiors. Poor wretch! he

he is more to be pitied than me. His attempt made a noise ; and you cannot conceive with what cruelty faults attended with notoriety, are punished in religious houses. A dungeon will be his abode for the rest of his life, and this too is the fate which awaits me if I am retaken ; but he will live longer in that situation than I should.

The pain of my fall is extremely severe, my legs are swelled, and I cannot walk a step. I work sitting, for I am unable to support myself standing. I yet dread the moment of my cure. What pretence shall I then have for not going out, and to what dangers must I expose myself by appearing in public ? Happily, however, I have still some time before me. My relations, who can entertain no doubt of my being at Paris, are certainly employed in making every possible search. I had re-

M 2

solved

solved to send for M. Manouri to my garret, to ask and to follow his advice ; but he was no more.

It seems that my escape is public, and this is what I expected. One of my companions spoke of it to me yesterday, adding the most odious circumstances, and reflections the most afflicting. Fortunately, she was hanging up the wet linen on cords, with her back to the lamp, and did not perceive my agitation. My mistress, however, remarking that I wept, said, Mary, what is the matter with you ?—Nothing, replied I.—What then, added she, are you foolish enough to feel so much pity for a wicked nun, destitute of morals and religion, who fell in love with a rascal of a monk, with whom she eloped from her convent ? you must needs be of a very compassionate disposition indeed. She had nothing to do



do but eat, drink, say her prayers, and sleep. She was very well where she was ; why did she not keep her situation ? it she had only been ducked three or four times in the river in this weather, that would soon have reconciled her to her state.... To this I answered, That people knew little of any difficulties but their own ; but this observation had better been spared, and she would not have added as she did, Fie ! she is a slut whom God will punish.... At this remark I leant upon the table, and remained in that posture till my mistress said, But, Mary, what are you dreaming of then ? while you sleep there, the work stands still.

I live in continual alarms. At the least noise I hear in the house, upon the stair-case, in the street, I am seized with terror, I tremble like a leaf, my knees refuse their support, and my work

M 3

drops

drops from my hands. I pass almost all my nights without closing an eye; and if I sleep, my slumbers are broken. I speak, I call, I cry out; and I cannot conceive how the people with whom I live, have not yet divined the mystery.

I never had the spirit of the cloister, as my gait sufficiently shows; but in the convent I had accustomed myself to certain observances, which I repeat mechanically. For instance, if the clock strikes, I make the sign of the cross, or kneel down. If any one knock at the door, I say *Ave*. If any one ask me a question, I always return an answer which concludes with a Yes or No, dear mother, or my sister. If a stranger come in, I fold my arms over my breast, and, instead of a curtesy, I bend forwards. My companions laugh, and think I amuse myself in counterfeiting

feiting the nun ; but it is impossible that their mistake can continue ; my thoughtlessness will betray me, and I shall be undone.

Hasten, Sir, to afford me relief. Doubtless you will say, tell me what it is in my power to do for you. My ambition is not great ; it is this : I should wish for the situation of chamber-maid or housekeeper, or even common servant ; provided I live unknown in the country, in some sequestered province, in the family of respectable people who see little company. The wages are no object of consideration. Security, repose, bread and water, are all I desire. Be assured that my employers will be perfectly satisfied with my service. In the house of my father I learnt to work, in the convent to obey. I am young, of a very gentle character. When my legs are cured, I

M 4

shall

shall have more strength than will be sufficient for the employment. I can sew, spin, embroider, and wash ; when I lived in the world I used to make up my own lace, and I shall soon recover my former dexterity. I am not awkward at any thing, and there is nothing to which I cannot demean myself. I have some voice, I am acquainted with music, and I can play upon the harpsichord, in such a manner as to amuse any mother who has a taste for it; and I could even give some lessons to her children. But I should be afraid of being betrayed by these marks of a systematic education. If it was necessary to learn to dress hair, I possess taste, I could take a master, and soon acquire this little qualification... A tolerable situation, Sir, if possible, or indeed a place of any kind, is all that I desire,

I desire, and I wish for nothing more. You may answer for the purity of my morals in spite of appearances; I feel their influence, I feel also that of piety.

Ah! Sir, all my calamities had been over, and I should have had nothing to fear from man, if God had not arrested my design. How often have I visited that deep well at the bottom of the garden belonging to the house! If I did not plunge myself into it, it was because I was not left perfectly at liberty. I know not what is the destiny reserved for me, but if I am compelled again to return to any convent whatever, I will not answer for myself; there are wells to be found every where. Have pity upon me, Sir, and do not, by neglecting my application, lay the foundation in your own breast, of long and bitter regret.

P. S.

P. S. I am overwhelmed with fatigue, I am surrounded with terror, and repose flies from me. These Memoirs, at first hastily written, I have submitted to a second perusal, when my mind was more collected; and I have discovered, that without the smallest intention, I have in truth, in every line, described myself as wretched as I really was, but much more amiable than I really am. Might the reason of this be, that we believe men to be less sensible to the picture of our sufferings, than to the image of our charms; and that we conceive it to be a more promising undertaking to seduce their passions, than to touch their feelings? I am very little acquainted with them, and I have not studied myself sufficiently to discover. Yet, if the Marquis, who is allowed to possess the most delicate feelings, should imagine that I address myself, not to his benevolence,



lence, but to his vice, what would he think of me? This reflection renders me uneasy. In truth, it were very wrong to impute to me personally a natural propensity common to my whole sex. I am a woman, perhaps a coquette for aught I know, but it is naturally, and without artifice.

EXTRACT

## E X T R A C T

FROM THE

LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE

O F M \* \* \*.

1770.

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THE Nun of M. De la Harpe has awaked my conscience, which has slept for ten years, by recalling to my recollection a horrible conspiracy of which I was the soul, carried on in concert with M. Diderot, and two or three other Gentlemen of this stamp, our intimate friends. It is not yet too late to make confession, and, in this holy time of Lent, to endeavour to obtain remission of his offence, along with my other sins, and drown all in the unfathomable well of divine mercy.

The

The year 1760 is distinguished in the calendars of the Parisian cockneys by the sudden and extraordinary reputation of *Ramponneau*, and the comedy of the *Philosophers*, performed in consequence of high authority, upon the the Theatre of the French Comedy. Of all this undertaking, there now remains only a recollection of the most profound contempt for Palissot, the author of this wonderful rhapsody, a feeling however which none of his protectors were disposed to share. Persons of the highest rank, while they favoured the attempt, thought themselves obliged in public to defend themselves from the imputation of such an understanding, as from a stain of dishonour. While all Paris was occupied with this piece of scandal, M. Diderot, whom the rogue of a French Aristophanes had chosen for his Socrates, was the only person



dispositions of the heart, the elevation of sentiment, that strict and delicate probity which render M. de Croismare as respectable as he is dear to his friends. I speak only of the endowments of his mind. An imagination ardent and sprightly, an original turn of mind, opinions which only stop at a certain point, and which he alternately adopts or proscribes, a playfulness of humour, always regulated by propriety, an incredible activity of mind, which, combined with an idle life, and the multiplicity of the resources of Paris, hurries him to the most different and dissimilar employments, has created for him, wants which no man ever before imagined, and suggested means equally extraordinary for their gratification. This temper of consequence gives rise to an infinite succession of enjoyments. Such are a part of the elements which compose the being  
of

of M. de Croismare, denominated by his friends, the charming Marquis by excellence, as they called the Abbé Galiani, the charming Abbé. M. Diderot, comparing his own simplicity of good-nature, with the acute turn of the Marquis de Croismare, sometimes told him, *Your wit is like the flame of spirit of wine, gentle and volatile, which spreads lambent over my fleece, but without ever burning it.*

This charming Marquis had left us at the beginning of the year 1759, to go to his estates in Normandy, near Caen. He had promised us to stay only the time necessary to put his affairs in order, but his absence was insensibly prolonged. He had collected all his children to that spot; he was very fond of his curate; he had abandoned himself to a passion for gardening; and as an imagination so lively as  
his



his required some real or imaginary objects of attachment, he had all at once plunged into the most ardent devotion. In spite of this, he still loved us all very tenderly ; but probably we never should have seen him again at Paris, if he had not lost his two sons in succession. This event restored him to us at the end of about four years, after an absence of more than eight. His devotion, like every thing else, evaporated in the air of Paris, and he is at this moment more amiable than ever.

As we felt his loss very keenly, in 1760, after having supported it fifteen months, we deliberated on the means of inducing him to return to Paris. We recollected, that some time before his departure, much conversation, and a great deal of interest, had been excited in the world concerning a nun, who appealed judicially against her vows,

Vol. II. N into

into which she had been forced by her parents. This unfortunate recluse interested the Marquis to such a degree, that without having seen her, without knowing her name, without even previously ascertaining the truth of the facts, he went, and solicited in her favour all the counsellors of the great chamber of the Parliament of Paris. In spite of this generous intercession, the nun, by I know not what misfortune, lost her cause, and her vows were adjudged valid. In recalling the whole of this adventure to our minds, we resolved to revive it to our own advantage. We took it for granted, that this nun had been so fortunate as to escape from her convent; and, in consequence, we made her write to the Marquis de Croismare, to entreat assistance and protection. We did not despair of seeing him arrive in all haste to

to fly to the assistance of his nun ; or, even had he guessed our knavery at the first glance, we were preparing materials for mirth. This remarkable piece of wagghery took quite a different turn, as you will see by the correspondence which I am about to submit to your perusal, between the pretended nun, and the honest and charming Marquis de Croismare, who never suspected for a moment the treachery of which we were guilty. It is this treachery which we have always had upon our consciences. We then employed ourselves at our suppers, amid loud bursts of laughter, in composing the letters which were to make our good Marquis weep ; and at these meetings we also read, with the same expressions of mirth, the virtuous answers which were returned by this generous and worthy friend. When we perceived, however, that the fortune

of our unfortunate heroine began to interest too deeply her tender benefactor, we adopted the expedient of taking her off by death, as you may remark, preferring the uneasiness which he would feel upon this event, to the certain danger of inflaming his imagination, by keeping her longer alive. After his return to Paris, we confessed to him the whole circumstances of this iniquitous conspiracy. He laughed, as you may conceive, at the trick ; and the misfortunes of the poor nun served only to strengthen the bonds of friendship among those she left behind. One circumstance no less singular, is, that the imagination of our friend in Normandy was heated by this pleasantry ; that of Diderot, on his part, was no less ardently inflamed. He began to write, in detail, the whole history of our nun. Had he completed his work, he would have wrought it up  
into

into one of the most just, the most interesting, and most pathetic romances that ever existed. It was impossible to read a single page of it, without being melted into tears : yet, as far as I recollect, it contained no mixture of love. It was a work of genius, which breathed the fervid imagination of its author. It was a performance too of public and general utility ; for it was the most severe satire upon cloisters ever composed. It was the more dangerous, because it only seemed to speak, of them with praise. The devotion of our young nun was angelic ; she ever preserved in her simple and tender heart, the most sincere reverence for every thing she had been taught to respect. But this romance never existed, except in detached shreds, and in that state has continued, as well as an infinite number of other works, of one of the finest geniuses

that France ever produced ; who would have rendered himself immortal by a number of masterly performances, had he ever possessed the disposition to be avaricious of his time, instead of resigning it to all the thoughtless people in Paris, whom I summon to appear at the last judgment, to answer before God and men, for the injury of which they were thus the authors.

The correspondence you are about to peruse, and our repentance, are all that remain of our poor unfortunate nun. You will please to remember, that all her letters, as well as of the lady by whom she was concealed, were fabricated by us sons of Beſial ; and that all those of her generous protector are genuine, and were written with pure sincerity.

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*Note*

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*Note of the Nun, to M. the Count de Croismare, Governor of the Royal Military Academy.*

An unfortunate woman, in whom the Marquis de Croismare took an interest three years ago, when he lived near the Academy of Music, is informed that he now resides in the Military Academy. She sends to him upon the present occasion, to know if she still may reckon upon his kindness, as she is now more to be pitied than ever.

A few words in answer to this application, if convenient, would be considered as a favour. Her situation is urgent; and it is of importance that the bearer of this note should be ignorant of its purport.

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*Answer.*

That the author of the note laboured under a mistake, and that the Marquis

N 4

de

de Croismare alluded to, was at present at Caen.

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This note was in the hand-writing of a young person whom we employed in the whole course of this correspondence. A porter carried it to the Military Academy, and brought back the verbal answer. This preliminary step was judged necessary, for several good reasons. The nun appeared, to confound the two cousins, and to be unacquainted with the orthography of their name. By this means, she very naturally learnt that her protector was at Caen. It was very probable, that the Governor of the Military Academy would avail himself of this opportunity to pass a jest on his cousin, and send him the note, which gave a great appearance of reality to our virtuous heroine. The Governor, a very amiable man,

man, like all who bear his name, was dissatisfied with the absence of his cousin, as well as ourselves; and we hoped to enlist him in the number of our accomplices. After his answer, the nun wrote to Caen.

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*Letter of the Nun to M. the Marquis de  
Croismare, at Caen.*

SIR,

I do not know to whom I write; but, in the distressing situation in which I am placed, it is you whom I address. If I have not been misinformed at the Military Academy, and if you are indeed the generous Marquis of whom I am in search, I will thank God. If you are not, I know not what I shall do. But I feel myself encouraged by the name you bear. I hope you will lend your assistance to an unfortunate person, whom you, Sir, or some other M. de Croismare,

mare, not he of the military academy, supported by your solicitations in an attempt she made three years ago, to obtain her enlargement from a perpetual prison, to which she had been condemned by the rigour of her parents. Despair has driven me to a second step, of which doubtless you will have heard; I have eloped from my convent. I was unable any longer to support my sufferings, and there only remained this method, or a still greater crime, to procure me that liberty, which I hoped from the justice of the laws.

If you were formerly my protector, Sir, let my present situation touch your heart, and awaken within you some feeling of compassion ! Perhaps you will think me indiscreet, in thus applying to a person unknown, in circumstances like mine. Alas ! Sir, did you know the desolate state to which I am reduced,

reduced, could you form any idea of the inhumanity with which faults that have excited public attention, are punished in religious houses, you would excuse me. But your soul is full of sensibility, and you would one day dread to recall to your memory an innocent creature, thrown for the remainder of of her life into the dismal recesses of a dungeon. Relieve me, Sir, relieve me. The kind of service which I hope from you, and which it is easier for you to grant me in the country than in Paris, is this : To procure, me either in your own house, or among your acquaintances, at Caen, or elsewhere, the situation of chamber-maid, or house-keeper, or even common servant. Provided I am unknown, in the family of respectable people, who live retired, wages form no consideration. Let me have only bread and water, but at the same time, let me

me be secure from pursuit. You may be assured that my employers will have no reason to be dissatisfied with my service. In the house of my parents, I learnt to work, in the convent to obey. I am young ; my disposition is gentle, and I am of a good constitution. When I recover my strength, it will be amply sufficient for every kind of domestic employment. I can embroider, sew, and wash. When I lived in the world, I used to make up my own lace, and I will soon recover the habit. I am not awkward, and I can apply to every thing. If it were necessary to learn to dress hair, I am not deficient in taste, and could soon acquire a knowledge of it. A tolerable situation, if possible, or a place, be what it may, is all I ask. You may answer for my morals, Sir. In spite of appearances, I am pious. There was a well at the bottom of the garden



garden of the convent I have quitted, a well upon which I have often gazed. All my ills had been ended, if God had not restrained me. Do not allow me, Sir, to be dragged back to this fatal house ! Do me this service, which I implore. It is a good work, which you will remember with satisfaction as long as you live, and which God will reward in this world, or in the next. Above all, Sir, consider that I live in continual alarm, and that I count the moments as they pass. My relations cannot entertain a doubt of my being at Paris ; they doubtless make every kind of enquiry to discover me ; do not allow them time to succeed in their search. I brought away with me all my clothes. I subsist by my labour, and by the assistance I receive from a worthy woman, who was formerly my friend, and to whom you may direct  
your

your answer. Her name is Madam Madin. She lives at Versailles. This good woman will furnish me with whatever is necessary for my journey ; and after I have obtained a place, I shall need nothing, and no longer be a burden upon her kindness. My conduct, Sir, will justify the protection which you may be pleased to grant me. Whatever may be the answer you give to my application, in the worst event, I shall only lament the severity of my fortune.

The following is Madam Madin's address. *Madam Madin, at the Pavillion de Bourgogne, Anjou Street, Versailles.*

You will have the goodness to send two covers ; her address upon the one, and a cross upon the other.

My God, with what anxiety do I wait your answer ! I am in continual  
agony.

agony. Your very humble and most obedient servant,

(Signed) SUSAN DE LA MARRE.

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We required an address to receive his answers, and we chose Madam Madin, the wife of an officer who had served in the infantry, and who actually lived at Versailles. She knew nothing of our trick, nor of the letters which she made him write to herself in the sequel, and for which we employed the hand-writing of another young person. Madam Madin only knew that it was necessary to receive, and convey to me all the letters with the post-mark of Caen. As chance would have it, M. de Croismare, after his return to Paris, and about eight years after our sin had been committed, met with Madam Madin one morning at the house of a lady of our acquaintance, who had  
4 been

been in the plot. It was a real theatrical scene. M. de Croismare expected to receive an infinite deal of information, with regard to the unfortunate person who had excited such lively interest in his mind, and of whom Madam Madin knew not a single word. This, accordingly, was the moment of our general confession, and of our pardon.

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*Answer of the Marquis de Croismare.*

MADemoiselle,

Your letter reached the very person you were in quest of. You have not been mistaken with regard to his sentiments. You may leave town immediately for Caen, to be the waiting-maid of a young lady.

The lady, your friend, may write to me, that she sends a waiting-maid, such as I desire, with such recommendation

dation of your qualifications as she thinks proper, without going into any particulars of your situation. She may fix also the name which you are to adopt, the conveyance you have taken, and, if possible, the day upon which you will arrive. If you take the coach for Caen, it sets out from Paris, early on Monday morning, and reaches this place upon Friday. It departs from Paris, in Saint Dennis Street, from the Great Stag. If there is no person to receive you upon your arrival at Caen, you will apply, in my name, at the house of M. Gassion, opposite the *Place Royal*, till you hear from me. As it is indispensably necessary on both sides that you should remain unknown, it is proper that the lady, your friend, should send me back this letter, on which, though without signature, you may most perfectly rely. Retain only the

seal, which will serve you as an introduction to the person to whom you apply.

Observe, Mademoiselle, exactly and diligently, what this letter prescribes. To act with prudence, you should encumber yourself neither with letters nor papers, nor any thing else, which could produce a discovery. It will be easy to send them on a future occasion. Rely, with the most perfect confidence, on the good intentions of your servant.

*At ....., near Caen, Thursday, 6th February, 1760.*

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This letter was addressed to Madam Madin. There was upon the cover of the inclosed a cross, according to agreement. The seal represented a Cupid, holding in the one hand a flambeau, and in the other two hearts, with a device which was illegible, because the  
seal



seal had been injured in opening the letter. It was natural for the nun, who was unacquainted with love, to take it for her guardian angel.

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*Answer of the Nun to M. the Marquis de Croismare.*

SIR,

I received your letter. I believe I have been ill, very ill. I am very weak. If it please God to take me to himself, I shall offer up incessant prayers for your safety. If I recover, I shall do every thing you command me. My dear Sir! generous man! I shall never forget your goodness.

My generous friend is expected from Versailles; she will communicate every thing to you.

*Sunday, February.*

O 2

I will

I will preserve the seal with care. It is a holy angel which the impression represents ; it is you, it is my guardian angel !

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M. Diderot being unable to attend the meeting of the club, this answer was sent without his concurrence. He did not approve of it, and alledged, that it would discover our conspiracy. He was mistaken, and I think he was wrong in disapproving of this answer. To satisfy him, however, we inserted in the minutes of the common council of the imposture, the following answer, which was *not* sent. Besides too, this illness was indispensably necessary to postpone her departure for Caen.

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*EXTRACT*

*EXTRACT from the MINUTES.*

The foregoing is the letter which was sent, and the following is that which Sister Susan ought to have written.

SIR,

I return you thanks for your goodness. I must no longer think of anything; all will soon be over with me. Shortly I shall be in the presence of the God of mercy; there I shall remember you. The physicians consult whether they shall bleed me once more. They may do as they please. Adieu, my dear Sir; I hope the abode to which I am going, will be happier than this; one day we shall meet there.

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*Letter of Madam Madin to M. the  
Marquis Croismare.*

I am by her bed side, and she urges me to write to you. She has been in

the last extremities, and my situation, which confines me to Versailles, has prevented me from coming sooner to her assistance. I knew that she was very ill, and totally desolate in the world; and yet I could not leave my charge. You may easily conceive, Sir, that she has suffered a great deal. She had received a fall, which she concealed. She was suddenly attacked with a violent fever, the progress of which it was impossible to check, but by frequent bleedings. I believe she is now out of danger. At present I am chiefly apprehensive lest her recovery be tedious, and that she will not be able to set out for a month or six weeks; she is already so weak, and she must still be farther reduced. Endeavour then, Sir, to obtain some delay, and let us jointly exert ourselves to save the most unfortunate and the most interesting creature in the world.

world. I am unable to describe the effect which your note produced upon her. She wept much ; she wrote the address of M. Gassion in her pocket-book ; and then she would write to you in spite of her weakness. She had then just recovered from a crisis of the fever ; I know not what she has said to you, for her poor head was then not quite in order. Excuse me, Sir, I write this in haste. I pity her extremely, but it is impossible for me to remain here many days together. You will receive the letter you wrote her. I send one nearly such as you require. I do not mention in it her ornamental accomplishments. They are not consistent with the situation into which she is about to enter ; and, in my opinion, she must renounce them entirely, if she wishes to remain unknown. In short, Sir, all that I have said of her is true. There is not a mother

who would not be overjoyed to have such a child. My first care, as you may suppose, was to place her in security ; and that point is attained. I cannot resolve to let her go till her health is perfectly re-established, and that cannot take place in less than a month or six weeks, as I have already had the honour to mention. To admit of this too, no accident must intervene. She preserves the seal of your letter ; it is kept in her prayer book, and under her pillow. I have never ventured to tell her that it was not yours. I broke it as I opened your answer, and replaced it with mine. In the disagreeable situation in which she was placed, I could not hazard communicating your letter to her without having read it. I venture to request from you a few lines to sustain her hopes. They are the only hopes she has left ; and if they were to



be cut off, I would not answer for her life. If you would have the goodness to acquaint me with a few particulars of the house where she is to go, I should avail myself of them to tranquillise her mind. Be under no apprehension about your letters, they shall all be sent back, as exactly as the first; and depend upon the personal interest I have in doing nothing inconsiderate. We shall conform to all your directions, unless you change your plan. Adieu, Sir. The dear unfortunate prays to God for you every moment her head permits.

I expect your answer, Sir, as before, at the Pavilion de Bourgogne, Anjou-street, Versailles.

*16th February, 1760.*

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*Ostensible*

*Ostensible Letter of M. Madin, such as the  
Marquis Croismare had required.*

SIR,

The person whom I propose to send you, is called Susan Saulier. I love her as if she were my own child ; you may, however, rely upon what I am about to tell you as literally true, because it is not my character to exaggerate. She has lost both father and mother. She is well born, and her education has not been neglected. She is acquainted with all the little kinds of work which are learnt by those who are clever, and who choose to be attentive. She speaks little, but very well, and writes naturally. If the person, for whose service she is intended, wished to make her read to her, she reads admirably. She is of midling stature. Her shape is very good. As to her  
countenance,

countenance, I have seldom seen one more interesting. She may, perhaps, be thought too young, for I do not think she is quite twenty-two years of age; but if she is deficient in the experience of age, it is supplied by that of misfortune. She has a great deal of discretion, and an uncommon share of judgement. I can answer for the innocence of her morals. She is pious, but not bigotted. She possesses a fund of easy natural wit, a mild gaiety of temper, and never is ill-natured. I have two daughters; and, if particular circumstances did not prevent Mademoiselle Saulier from settling at Paris, I should seek no other governess for them, nor could I expect to find one so well qualified for the situation. I have known her from her infancy, and have never lost sight of her. She will

will leave this place amply supplied with clothes. I will undertake the little expences of her journey, and also those of her return, if she should happen to be sent back to me. This is the least I can do for her. She has never been out of Paris ; she knows not where she is going ; she thinks herself lost ; and I have the utmost difficulty in supporting her spirits. A few lines from you, Sir, giving some account of the person she is to serve, the house in which she is to live, and the business she will have to perform, will have more effect upon her mind than all I can say. I hope, in asking this favour, I do not trespass too much upon your goodness. Her whole fear is that she will not give satisfaction. The poor child is but little acquainted with her own qualifications.

I have

I have the honour to be, with all the  
sentiments which you deserve,

Sir,

Your very humble

and most obedient servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, 16th February, 1760.

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*Letter of the Marquis Croismare to  
Madam Madin.*

MADAM,

Two days ago I received a few lines,  
acquainting me with the indisposition of  
Mademoiselle \*\*\*. Her misfortunes  
inspire me with the most poignant  
sorrow, the state of her health distresses  
me extremely. May I ask of you the  
consolation of being informed of her  
situation; the line of conduct she in-  
tends to pursue, in a word, an answer  
to the letter I wrote her? From your  
politeness, and the interest you take in  
her

her concerns, I presume to hope that you will not refuse me that satisfaction.

Your most humble  
and obedient servant.

*Caen, 17th February, 1760.*

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*Another Letter from the Marquis Croismare  
to Madam Madin.*

I was extremely impatient to hear from you, Madam; and, happily, your letter has suspended my uneasiness with regard to the situation of Mademoiselle \*\*\*, whom you assure me is now out of danger, and safe from all enquiries. I wrote to her, and you may give still farther assurances of the continuance of my sentiments. Her letter struck me; and, in the critical situation in which I saw she was placed, I thought I could not do better than settle her in my own family, in placing her with my daughter, who



who, unfortunately, has lost her mother. This, then, Madam, is the family in which I intended to provide for her. I can depend upon myself, and upon my attention to soothe her sufferings, without allowing the secret to escape, which, perhaps, would be more difficult in other hands. I cannot but lament both her situation, and that my fortune does not permit me to do her all the service I desire. But what can we do when we are controuled by the law of necessity? I live two leagues from the town, in a very pleasant country house, where I pass the time, very retired, with my daughter and my eldest son, who is a youth of feeling, and of religion; to whom, however, I shall communicate nothing which regards her situation. As to the domestics, they are all people who have been long in my service,

so

so that my situation is very calm and tranquil. I must farther add, that the alternative I now propose is only to be considered as a resource in case nothing else shall offer. If any thing better should occur, I do not mean to constrain her by any engagement. But she may depend upon it, that she shall ever find in me a certain resource. Thus she may endeavour to re-establish her health without uneasiness. I shall wait till that is accomplished, and in the mean time I shall be extremely happy to hear of her frequently.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your very humble

and most obedient servant.

*Caen, February 21st, 1760.*

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*Letter*

*Letter of the Marquis of Croismare to Sister Susan. (Upon the cover was a Cross.)*

Nobody; Mademoiselle, is more sensibly affected than I am, by the situation in which you are placed. I am the more and more impelled to exert myself, in order to procure you some consolation amidst the misfortunes by which you are pursued. Resume the tranquillity of your mind, and endeavour to recover your strength, and rely with the most perfect confidence upon my sentiments. Your only object of attention should be to re-establish your health, and to remain unknown. Were it in my power to alleviate your misfortunes, I would do it with pleasure. But your situation constrains me, and I can only lament the hard law of necessity. The person for whom I intend you, is one whom I hold most dear; and you will be chiefly

under my own superintendance. Thus, as much as possible, it shall be my care to soften the little hardships, inseparable from the station you are to occupy. You will give me all your confidence, and I will repose entirely upon your attention. This assurance ought to calm your mind, and prove my sentiments; and the sincere attachment with which I am, Mademoiselle, your very humble and most obedient servant.

*Caen, 21 Feb. 1760.*

I wrote to Madam Madin, who can give you farther information.

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*Letter from Madam Madin to the  
Marquis de Croismare.*

SIR,

The recovery of our dear invalid is now assured: the fever, and the disorder in her head, are quite gone; there

there is every symptom of a speedy and complete convalescence. Her lips are still a little pale, but her eyes resume their wonted lustre. The colour begins to return into her cheeks ; her flesh has regained its fresh appearance. and will not be long in acquiring firmness ; every thing goes well since the tranquillity of her mind was restored. It is now, Sir, that she feels the value of your kindness ; and nothing can be more affecting, than the way in which she expresses her sense of it. I should wish to be able to describe to you what passed between us, when I delivered to her your last letters. She took them, her hands trembled ; she breathed with difficulty as she read them ; she stopped at the end of every line, and throwing herself upon my neck, while she shed a flood of tears, she said to me, *Well, Mama Madin, then God has not forsaken me, he still in-*

*tends that I shall be happy. It is God who inspired me with the idea of applying to this dear Gentleman: who in the world, except himself, would have taken pity upon me? Let us thank Heaven for its first favours, in hopes that it will still confer more. She then sat down upon her bed, and began to pray; and afterwards returning upon some passages in your letter, she said, It is his daughter that he entrusts to me! Ah! mama, she will resemble him; she will be gentle, munificent, and charitable, like him. After pausing a little, she proceeded with some emotion: She has no mother! I regret that I do not possess all the experience which would be necessary for taking such a charge. I know nothing, but I will do my best; I will recall, night and morning, what I owe to her father: gratitude will supply many defects. Will it be long before I get well?*

*When*



*When will they permit me to eat? I don't feel any of the effects of my fall; none at all.* I go through this short detail, Sir, because I hope that it will please you. She displayed, in her conversation and manner, so much innocence and warmth, that I was almost beside myself. I know not what I would have given, that you could have seen and heard her. Yes, Sir, either I am blind, or you will have in her, a girl of ten thousand; one who will prove a blessing to your family. What you have had the goodness to inform me of yourself, Mademoiselle your daughter; of little master, your son; and of your situation; corresponds entirely with her wishes. She persists in the first propositions she made to you. She asks only food and cloathing; and if it is agreeable to you, you may take her at her word: though

I am not rich, the rest will be my concern. I love this child, I have adopted her in my heart ; and the trifle which I have hitherto spared her out of my income, shall be continued after my death. I will not conceal from you that the words, *her last resource, and leaving her at liberty to accept of a better situation, if an opportunity offers*, made her uneasy ; I was not sorry at finding her possessed of this measure of delicacy. I shall not fail to inform you of her progress in convalescence ; but I have a grand scheme in agitation, and I do not despair of its succeeding, after her health is re-established, if you recommend me to one of your friends ; you must have a great many here. He must be a prudent, intelligent, clever man, not of too much consideration, who has access, either through himself or friends, to some great people, whom  
I shall

I shall name, and who can have admission to Court, without belonging to it. From the way in which the plan is arranged in my mind, it will not be necessary that he be made a confident; he may serve us without knowing how; and even though my attempt should turn out to be fruitless, we shall derive the advantage from it, of making it believed that she is in a foreign country. If you can recommend me to some person, I beg that you will mention his name, and where he lives; you can afterwards write to him, that Madam Madin, whom you have known for a long time, will wait upon him to ask him to do her a service; and request him to take an interest in the business, if it is practicable. I have only to add, that you may depend upon the interest that I take in our unfortunate girl, and upon some prudence, for which I am indebted

to experience. The joy which your last letter occasioned her, has a little raised her pulse ; but it will be nothing.

I have the honour to be, with sentiments of the highest respect,

SIR,

Your very humble

and obedient servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

*Paris, 3d March, 1760.*

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The idea of Madam Madin applying for a recommendation to one of the friends of the generous protector of Sister Susan, was a suggestion of the Devil, by means of which his agents hoped to bring their friend insensibly from Normandy, to apply personally to me, and to make me a confidant of the whole affair : the scheme perfectly succeeded, as will be seen from the rest of the correspondence,

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*Letter*

*Letter from Sister Susan, to M. the  
Marquis de Croismare.*

SIR,

Madam Madin has delivered to me the two answers with which you have honoured me, and likewise has read to me part of the letter that you have written to her. I accept your offer. It is a hundred times better than I deserve; yes, a hundred, a thousand times better. I know little of the world; I have so little experience; and I am sensible of the vast deal it would require to render me worthy of your confidence; but I hope for your indulgence, in consideration of my zeal, and of my gratitude. My place will make me; and Mama Madin says, that that is better, than if I were made for my place. My God! how impatient I am for my recovery, that I may go and throw myself at my benefactor's feet, and serve him, by  
5 being

## THE NUN.

being of all the use I can to his dear girl ! They tell me that it will be a month before I get well. A month ! That is a long time. My dear Sir, preserve your kindness for me. I am transported with joy ; but they do not wish that I should write ; they will not permit me to read ; they keep me in bed ; they'll give me nothing but barley water ; they famish me ; and all for my good. God be praised ! it is not, however, with my inclination that I obey.

I am, with a grateful heart,

SIR,

Your most obedient,

and very humble servant,

(Signed). SUSAN SAULIER.

*Paris, March 3d, 1760,*

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*Letter*



*Letter from M. the Marquis de Croismare to Madam Madin.*

Some ailments, to which I have been subjected for a few days, have prevented me, Madam, from answering you sooner, and expressing the pleasure I felt at being informed of the convalescence of Mademoiselle Saulier. I hope it will soon be in your power to inform me of the perfect re-establishment of her health, tidings to which I look forward with anxiety. But I am mortified at not having it in my power to contribute to the execution of a scheme in her favour, that you have in contemplation, and which, without knowing what it is, I am sure is an excellent one, from the prudent management of which you are capable, and the interest you take in her welfare. I am very little known at Paris, and only among a few, as little known as myself ; acquaintances, such  
as

as you desire, are not easily to be found. Continue, I beseech you to send me accounts of Mademoiselle Saulier, whose interests shall always be most dear to me.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient humble servant.

*March 13, 1760.*

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*Answer of Madam Madin to M. the  
Marquis of Croismare.*

SIR,

I was to blame, perhaps, in not explaining myself upon the project which I have conceived, but I was exceedingly pressed in point of time. The following is the outline of what struck me. In the first place, you must know, that the Cardinal de Fleury protected the family. By his death, they all lost a very valuable friend,

friend; particularly my Susan, who had been presented to him in her infancy: The old Cardinal being fond of beautiful children; Susan's grace did not fail to strike him, and accordingly he took the charge of her fortune. But when he died, they disposed of her in the way of which you have been informed; and her protectors thought that they discharged their duty to the youngest, by marrying her eldest sisters to two creatures of their own; one of whom has an office of some consideration at Alby, the other the receipt of the customs at Castres, three leagues from Montpelier. They are of as a merciless disposition, but they hold their situations at the good will of those by whom they were placed in them. I have thought then, that if one had some mode of access to Madam the Marchioness of Castries, whose name is Fleury, and who

who took an active part in my child's process, and if the melancholy situation of a young person, exposed to all the consequences of misery in a foreign and distant country, was represented to her, that this lady, who has a great character for compassion, might interest herself with her husband, or with the Duke of Fleury, her brother, and that we might be able, through their interference, to procure her a small annuity from her two brothers-in-law, who have got all the property of the family, and who have no intention of giving any share of it to poor Susan. I really think, Sir, the plan is worthy the serious consideration of us both. With this small pension, together with what I have settled upon her, and what she may receive from your goodness, she would be very well for the present, and tolerably provided for the future; so that I could part with her with  
the

less regret. But, I know neither M. the Marquis de Castries, nor his lady, nor any person connected with them; and it was the child who suggested to me the idea of applying to you. I have only to add, that her convalescence does not advance so rapidly as I could wish. She was hurt about the reins, as I believe I have told you: the pain of her fall, which was gone for some time, has returned; it comes and goes. It is accompanied with a slight shivering, but her pulse does not indicate the smallest symptoms of fever. The physician shakes his head, and has not an air which pleases me. She is going to mass next Sunday; she wishes it, and I have sent her a large cloak, which will completely cover her; under which I think she may pass half an hour without danger in a small church. She sighs for the moment of her departure; and

I am

I am sure she prays for nothing with greater fervour, than the completion of her cure; and a continuance of the kindness of her benefactor. If she is able to travel between Easter and Low Sunday, I shall not fail to let you know. Her absence would not obstruct my endeavours to discover, among my acquaintances, some one who may have interest with Madam de Castries, or her husband.

I am, Sir, with infinite respect,

Your most obedient

and very humble servant,

(Signed) — MOREAU MADIN.

*Versailles, March 25, 1760.*

P. S. I have forbidden her to write to you, for fear of importuning you; no other consideration would have prevented her.

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*Letter*



*Letter from M. the Marquis de Croismare  
to Madam Madin.*

MADAM,

Your scheme in favour of Mademoiselle Saulier appears to be very commendable; and it pleases me the more, because I eagerly wish to see her, in her misfortune, placed in a situation a little passable. I do not despair of finding some friend to interest himself with Madam de Castries; but it will require time and some precautions, as well for the purpose of avoiding a disclosure of the secret, as to ascertain the prudence of the person to whom I apply. Be assured I shall not lose sight of it; in the mean time, if Mademoiselle Saulier perseveres in the same sentiments, and if her health is sufficiently re-established, let nothing prevent her from setting out; she will find my dispositions towards her always the same.

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with

with those which I have already manifested, and my zeal to sweeten if possible the bitterness of her lot unabated. The situation of my affairs, and the misfortunes of the times, have obliged me to retire to the country, for the sake of economy, so that we live in the greatest simplicity. Mademoiselle Saulier, therefore, need put herself to very little expence in dress, as common things will do for the country. It is in this rusticated simple state that she will find us, and where I hope, notwithstanding the frugality I am obliged to observe, she will experience some pleasure and comfort. You will have the goodness, Madam, to inform me of her departure; and in case she has mislaid my address, it is, M. Gassion, opposite the *Place Royale, at Caen*. If, however, I am informed of the time of day at which she will arrive, she will find

find some person to conduct her here without stopping.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your very humble

and most obedient servant.

*March 31, 1760.*

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*Letter of Madam Madin, to M. the  
Marquis de Croismare.*

If she persevere in the same sentiments, Sir! How can you entertain a doubt of it? What can she do better than to go and pass her days in happiness and tranquillity with a man of worth, and in the society of a genteel family? Is she not too happy in being the object of your regard? and where would she lay her head, were she to be secluded from the asylum which you have had the generosity to offer her? These are her own words, Sir, which I

am only repeating. She was obstinate in wishing to go to mass on Easter Sunday ; it was contrary to my advice, which she has suffered from not taking. She returned from church with a considerable fever upon her, and ever since that fatal day she has been worse. Sir, I cannot permit her to set off till her health is perfectly restored. There is now a good deal of heat about her reins, at the place where she was hurt by the fall ; I have been inspecting it, but I can perceive nothing. Her physician told me the day before yesterday, as we went down stairs together, that he was afraid that a suppuration was beginning ; but that he must wait to see how it would turn out. She does not want appetite however ; she sleeps, and does not fall much away. I now and then observe a little more colour in her cheeks, and a little more  
vivacity.

vivacity in her eyes than is natural to them; and then her impatience distresses me. She rises, she tries to walk; but whenever she leans a little to the weak side, there is a cry which is enough to pierce one's heart. I have hopes of her, notwithstanding; and I shall employ the mean time in arranging her little wardrobe.—It consists of

A robe of English callimanco, which she can wear singly while the warm weather lasts, and which she may line for the winter with another of blue cotton which she now wears.

Five shifts with furnitures, some of cambric, and the rest of muslin. About the middle of June I shall send her a piece of linen which is now bleaching at Penlis, to make six more.

Some white petticoats, of which two are dimity flounced with muslin.

Two wrappers of the same pattern,

Q 3

which

which I had made for my youngest daughter, and which fit her exactly. They will serve for dressing gowns.

Some corsets, aprons, and neck-handkerchiefs.

Two dozen of pocket-handkerchiefs.  
Some night-caps.

Six night-gowns, with eight pairs of single and three pairs of double ruffles.

Six pairs of fine cotton stockings.

This is all with which I have been able to provide her. I carried them to her this morning, and I cannot tell you with what sensibility she received them. She inspected one thing, she tried on another, she grasped my hands and kissed them : she could not refrain from crying when she saw my daughter's wrappers. What makes you cry ? I said to her. Have you not always stood in that relation to me ? *True*, replied she, and then added, *Now that I hope to be happy,*



*happy, I think I should be unwilling to die. Mama, how is it that this heat in my side will not go away? I wish they would put something to it. I am delighted, Sir, that you do not disapprove of my plan, and that you see a probability of its succeeding. I leave every thing to your prudence; but I think it my duty to warn you that the Marquis de Castries is going to serve in the campaign: that as soon as he sets out, Madam de Castries will go to her estate; and that in seven or eight months we shall be quite forgotten here. Every thing soon loses its interest in this country; we are less spoken of already than we were; and in a short time we shall not be spoken of at all. Don't be afraid that she has mislaid the address you sent her; she never opens her prayer-book without looking at it; she will sooner forget*

the name of Saulier than that of M. Gas-  
sion. I asked her if she did not wish  
to write to you: she replied, that she  
had begun a long letter, which she  
meant should contain every thing which  
she could least dispense with communi-  
cating to you, if God in his mercy was  
pleased to recover her, and bring you to-  
gether; but that she had a pre-sentiment  
that she should never see you. *This com-  
plaint; added she, is of too long dura-  
tion; I shall neither profit from your good-  
ness nor from his; either the Marquis will  
change his mind, or I shall not recover.*  
What folly, said I! Do you know that  
if you entertain these gloomy ideas,  
what you are afraid of will come to  
pass? She said, *The will of the Lord be  
done!* I requested her to shew me what  
she had written: it frightened me; it  
was a volume. There, said I to her,  
somewhat angry, is what kills you.  
She

She answered, *What would you have me do? I am either afflicted with pain or with ennui.* And when have you been able to scribble all this? *A little at one time, and a little at another. Whether I live or die, I wish him to know what I have suffered.*—I have forbidden her to continue it. Her physician has backed my prohibition. I pray you, Sir, to join your authority to my entreaties; she will consider you as her master, and will obey you as such. As I conceived, however, the time to hang heavy upon her, and that it was necessary that she should be employed, was it only to prevent her from persisting in writing, musing, and fretting; I proposed that she should tambour a vest for you. The idea pleased her exceedingly, and she has begun the work. God grant that she may have time to finish

it here ! One word, if you please, forbidding her to write or to work too much. I had resolved to return to night to Versailles, but I am uneasy ; the supuration frightens me, and I wish to be with her to-morrow, when her physician returns. I have unfortunately some faith in the presentiments of the sick ; they are sensible of their own situation. When I lost M. Madin, all the physicians assured me that he would recover ; he said himself he never should recover, and the poor man spoke what was but too true. I shall remain with her, and shall have the honour to write you ; if I lose her, I think I shall never get the better of it. You will be happy, Sir, in never having seen her. Now the wretches who determined her to make her escape, are sensible of their loss, but it is too late.

I have

I have the honour to be with sentiments of respect and gratitude, both on her account and my own.

Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

Paris, April 13, 1760.

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*Answer of M. the Marquis de Croismare  
to Madam Madin.*

I share, Madam, with real sensibility, your uneasiness respecting the illness of Mademoiselle Saulier. Her unfortunate situation always gave me infinite concern; but the details which you have had the goodness to send me, prejudice me so much in her favour, that I cannot help feeling a most lively interest in every thing which relates to her: so far am I from having changed my sentiments upon this subject, that I beseech

beseech you to take the trouble of repeating to her those which I expressed in my letters, and which will never undergo any alteration. I have thought it prudent not to write to her, that she may have no occasion for making any reply. Every kind of exertion must, no doubt, be prejudicial in her present infirm state; and, if I had any power over her, I would employ it in restricting her. There is no person fitter than you, Madam, to acquaint her with my opinion upon this head. Not that I am not charmed at receiving accounts from herself; but I cannot approve in her an action of pure complaisance, which may contribute to retard her recovery. The interest which you, Madam, feel in her welfare, renders it unnecessary for me to request of you to moderate her exertions. You may believe me to be with  
the



the most sincere affection for her, and  
with particular esteem and high respect  
for your character,

Madam,  
Your very humble  
and obedient Servant.

*April 25, 1760.*

P. S. I have this moment written to  
one of my friends, by whom you can  
have access to Madam de Castries.  
He is a Mr. Grimm, Secretary to the  
Duke of Orleans; he lives in the *Rue*  
*Neuve*, Luxembourg, near the *Rue*  
*Saint Honoré*, at Paris. I informed  
him that you would take the trouble to  
call at his house, represented to him  
the great obligation under which I lie  
to you, and expressed a strong desire  
of manifesting my gratitude. He usu-  
ally dines from home.

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*Letter of Madam Madin to M. the  
Marquis de Croismare.*

Oh ! Sir, what I have suffered since I had the honour of writing to you ! I cannot think of making you a partner of my pain ; and I hope you will take it kind that I have not subjected your susceptible heart to a trial so severe. You know how dear she is to me. Conceive then, Sir, what I must have felt at seeing her near five hours concluding her life in the most acute pain. At length I think God has taken pity upon her and upon me. The poor unfortunate still lives, but it cannot be long. Her strength is exhausted ; she can hardly speak or open her eyes. Patience is all that is left her. Were she to lose that, what would become of us ? The hopes which I entertained of her recovery were extinguished all of a sudden. There is an abscess  
formed

formed in her side, which has been making a secret progress ever since her fall. She would not suffer it to be opened in time; and when she could have resolved upon it, it was too late. She perceives her last moment approaching; she insists upon my leaving her; and I confess to you I am not able to witness the spectacle. The sacrament was administered to her last night between ten and eleven. It was done at her own desire. After this melancholy ceremony, I remained alone by her bed-side. She heard me sigh; she sought my hand; I gave it her; she took it, raised it to her lips, and pulling me to her, she said in a tone of voice so low that I could scarcely hear her, *Mama, one favour more. What, my child? Give me your blessing, and go away.* She added, *M. the Marquis . . . . . do not fail to thank him.* These words

words will be her last. I have left orders, and retired to a friend's house, where I am waiting in momentary expectation. It is one o'clock in the morning. Perhaps we have now a friend in Heaven.

I am with respect, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

*Signed* MOREAU MADIN.

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This succeeding letter was due the 7th of May; but it was not dated.

*Letter of Madam Madin to M. the Marquis de Croismare.*

The dear child is no more; her pains are at end, and ours have still perhaps a long time to last. She departed from this world to that whither we must all follow her, on Wednesday last, between three and four of the morning. As her life had been innocent, so her last moments

ments were tranquil, notwithstanding all that happened to disturb them. Permit me to thank you for the tender interest you took in her fortune, it is the only duty which I have now to perform to her. Enclosed are all the letters with which you have honoured us. I have kept some of them myself, and I have found the rest among some papers which he delivered to me a few days before she died, and which she told me contained the history of her life, at her parents, and in the three convents in which she lived, and of what had passed since her escape. It is not probable that I shall read them soon; I cannot see any thing which belonged to her, nor any thing even which my friendship had destined for her, without awakening the most pungent sorrow.

If ever I can be so happy, Sir, as to

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be

be useful to you in any way, I shall be much flattered by your remembrance of me. I am, with those sentiments of respect and gratitude which are due to kindness and compassion,

SIR,

Your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed) MOREAU MADIN.

May 10, 1760.

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*Letter of M. the Marquis de Croismare  
to Madam Madin.*

I know, Madam, what it costs a tender and benevolent heart to lose the object of its attachment, and the happy opportunity of dispensing favours, the rightful claim of misfortune and amiable qualities, such as those possessed by the dear young lady who is now the cause of our regrets. I share your sorrow, Madam, with the most tender sensibility. You knew her, and this  
renders



renders your separation the more cruel. Without having had that good fortune, her misfortunes touched me with the most lively sympathy, and I tasted in anticipation, the pleasure of being able to contribute to the tranquillity of her days. If Heaven has ordered it otherwise, and deprived me of that satisfaction so much desired, I bow to its desires, but I cannot be insensible to the loss I have sustained. You have at least the consolation to have acted from motives the most noble, in a manner the most generous. I have admired your conduct, and my ambition has been to imitate it. I have only to express the ardent wish I feel to be honoured with your acquaintance, and of having an opportunity of telling you in person, how much I have been enchanted with your greatness of soul,

R 2

and

and with what respectful consideration  
I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most humble

and very obedient servant.

*May 18, 1760.*

Whatever respects the memory of our  
unfortunate, is become extremely pre-  
cious. Will it not be too great a sacri-  
fice to ask of you to transmit to me,  
the short memoirs which she has written  
of her various misfortunes? I request  
this favour of you, Madam, with the  
greater confidence, that you have told  
me I have some right to them. I shall  
be punctual in returning them, as well  
as all your letters, if you think proper,  
by the first opportunity. You will have  
the goodness to send them by the driver  
of the Caen waggon, who lodges at the  
*Grand Cerf, Rue St. Denis, Paris,* and  
who sets out every Monday.

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THUS

THUS ends the history of the unfortunate Susan de la Marre, called Saulier. It is a great pity that the memoirs of her life had not been extended into a regular history : they would have formed a very interesting narrative. After all, M. the Marquis de Croismare is much obliged to the perfidy of his friends, for having furnished him with an opportunity of succouring misfortune, with a nobleness, an interest, and a simplicity, truly worthy of him ; the part which he acts in this correspondence, is not the least affecting of the romance.

We may, perhaps, be blamed for hastening the death of Sister Susan with very little humanity ; but it became necessary, from information we had received from the castle of Lasson, that they were fitting up an apartment for the reception of Mademoiselle de Croismare ; and that her father intended to take her out of the convent where she  
had

had lived since her mother's death. Our information further stated, that they expected a woman from Paris, to act, in the mean time, as governess for the young lady ; and that M. de Croismare was endeavouring otherwise to provide for the good woman who had hitherto had the care of his daughter. These advices left us no alternative ; and neither the youth, nor the beauty, nor the innocence of Sister Susan, nor her gentle, susceptible, and tender heart, capable of melting those even who were least inclined to compassion, could save her from the stroke of death. But as we have adopted all the sentiments of Madam Madin for this interesting creature, the regret which we feel in consequence of that event, is no less lively than that of her respectable protector.

THE END.

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